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Correspondences with the Romanian Immigrant Experience in America

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CONTENTS

“We have become strangers; strangers to those we left and strangers to those we came to.”

(Rølvaag, *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 126)[1]

Keywords: identity, assimilation, cultural identity, ethnicity, belonging, homeland, uprootedness, twofold identities, Norwegian-American, Romanian-American, migration literature, American literature, immigrant narratives, Norwegian emigration to America, Romanian emigration to America, America letters, cultural heritage, Ole Edvart Rølvaag, Knut Hamsun, Anișoara Stan

INTRODUCTION

This book explores the Norwegian and Romanian immigrants’ quest for identity, the difficulties it implies, the inner conflicts that appear during the assimilation process, as revealed by the immigrant narratives of the Norwegian writers Ole Edvart Rølvaag and Knut Hamsun and of the Romanian writer Anișoara Stan, each author having a different perspective on emigration. A comparison between the Norwegian and Romanian emigration to America from its beginning until the end of the Second World War will further support the idea that the problems encountered by the immigrants on their way to adapting to a new cultural environment were rather similar.

The myth of the American dream has attracted millions to the New World with the promise of fulfilment, of achieving success through determination and hard work, no matter the origin, the ethnicity, or the social-class of the one attempting to accomplish it. Although the promise of material plenty must have contributed greatly to its widespread appreciation, James Truslow

[1] Original text in Norwegian: “Vi er blitt fremmede. Fremmede er vi for det folk vi forlot, og fremmede er vi for det folk vi kom til.” (Rølvaag, *Amerika-breve fra P.A. Smevik til hans far og bror i Norge,* 1912, 171).

Adams, the one who first coined the concept, believes it encompasses more than that:

> It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class. And that dream has been realized more fully in actual life here than anywhere else, though very imperfectly even among ourselves. (Adams, 1938, 318).

Thus, 'America' became synonymous with 'opportunity', luring immigrants from all over the world, particularly from Europe, with the promise of providing conditions for the individual's development, free from the restraints of class, or from the barriers typical of the Old World. Yet, the dream could neither be achieved by all, nor without struggle. As the immigrants stepped on American shores and began to face the challenges of dealing with a new language, new people, new mentalities, as they internalised the myth, it often lost its shine, leaving them prey to inner conflicts.

No matter how strong the incentive to emigrate, the phenomenon of migration leads to an identity crisis. Acculturation takes place, inevitably, at the convergence of the homeland culture and the culture which would eventually become dominant. Individual experiences or those of immigrant communities are different: as W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki mention in the acculturation theory they propose, we can meet the bohemian, who chooses to abandon the homeland culture and embraces the culture to which he emigrated, the philistine, who sticks to his homeland culture and does not succeed to adapt, but also the creative type, who successfully adapts to the new culture, but not giving up on his birth culture (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958, 1853-1854). However, even the immigrants who succeeded to adapt and not give up on their cultural heritage still faced inner conflicts and difficulties.

Until now, most research has focused on comparing similar ethnic groups, or related ethnic groups, but there are certain similarities even between immigrant communities that seem to be very different which require our attention. Moreover, the social-scientific research, although rich and diverse, is often limited in its objectives as it focuses on single aspects of migration,

such as the decision to leave, and fails "to capture the essence of what it is like to be a migrant; and be, or not be, part of a community, a nation, a society – cut off from history and from a sense of place. It fails to portray nostalgia, anomie, exile, rootlessness, restlessness." (King, Connell, and White, 1995, ix-x). Thus, the sociological research cannot illustrate the personal dimension of emigration. Migration literature comes to fill this void and fulfils at the same time a therapeutic function by enabling the immigrant writers to express their inner struggle, offering the immigrant readers reflections of their own experiences.

This book intends to show how identity became twofold in the case of Norwegian and Romanian immigrants in America as they no longer belonged to their homeland, while never really managing to adhere entirely to the New World. The aim of this book is to look beyond the advantages of migration and the declared happy life in the New World and to see how much the immigrant narratives reflect the questions of identity and belonging.

The research is innovative through its unique juxtaposition of three different authors, with different cultural backgrounds and immigrant experiences, particularly selected in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of what it feels like to be an immigrant in America.

RESEARCH TOPIC

In view of the perspectives presented above, this book focuses on identity with reference to immigration and culture, discussing the Norwegian immigrants' experiences in America and how immigration shaped their identities. From a methodological point of view, the analysis will concentrate on the descriptions of the elements that make up one's cultural identity, on the sense of belonging as it is reflected in the narratives.

The present analysis does not claim focus on objectivity or on historical truth, but chooses instead to concentrate on the personal experience of migration. This book should be approached with this in mind, starting from the premises that historical truth tries to serve objectivity, whereas fiction and other immigrant narratives make no such claims as they are expressions of subjective, personal views on migration.

There are several noteworthy contributions of this research that cover the gap in knowledge related to understanding immigration from two distinct viewpoints: the Norwegian, on the one hand, and the Romanian, on the other hand. Moreover, the historical perspective upon emigration represents the backbone of the book.

Previous studies on identity in migration literature have not sought correlations between immigrant narratives belonging to very different cultural backgrounds. I have initiated an in-depth study of the Norwegian and Romanian immigrant quest of identity in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century as illustrated in migration literature, which is grounded in the historical perspective that illustrates correspondences between the two emigrations. Moreover, the present research provides additional evidence with respect to the way different ethnic groups perceived the immigration experience in America.

In order to provide background for this analysis of two different cultures, several points of convergence between the two countries for the period selected for the analysis have been identified, namely from the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. The first refers to the marginality of the two worlds, as, geographically, both Norwegians and Romanians are inhabiting lands marginal to Europe, although at opposite ends. The geographical location has had influence on the development of culture in these areas, as elsewhere. Thus, being on the outskirts of the continent meant having limited access to the centre of Europe, and playing a less prominent role in the international context. Nevertheless, the fact that Norway is located in the western part of the continent, having a huge coastline was essential to its development, accounting for the earlier character of the Norwegian emigration, whereas Romania's eastern position, in the way of migratory peoples, as well as the limited access to the sea, were decisive for its fate. Moreover, Norway's physical features offered limited arable land for agriculture, a harsher climate, hence. The Romanians in the mountainous areas of Transylvania also faced such difficulties. In addition, the economic situation, one of the push factors of the emigration, was difficult in both lands. In Transylvania, however, the socio-political situation had an even greater importance, as Romanians were a tolerated nation, excluded from the government of the province, and therefore could not possess land, which generated additional difficulties in surviving. A second point of convergence is the political situation, as Norway had not been an

independent state for hundreds of years, and the national consciousness awakened at the beginning of the nineteenth century was built throughout the one-hundred-year period, while Transylvania, the region of origin of the large majority of immigrants in America, was under foreign rule until the unification of Romania in 1918. Lastly, both countries had large rural populations, with strong rural traditions, which generated similar cultural patterns. This also entailed a close relation to nature and a strong appreciation and thirst for land, which provided the impetus for emigration for both nations. Thus, the economic and socio-political context of the two countries was highly relevant for how the emigration evolved.

CONTEXT

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in addressing issues related to multicultural societies. In a globalized world, identity is not confined within physical borders. It is dynamic, undergoing constant change, and its many valences reveal the complexity of life experiences. Although migration is a phenomenon as old as our species, its impact has never been greater due to its almost universal character, generating myriads of experiences and interpretations. Naturally, displacement and uprootedness cause questions of identity and belonging, and migration literature has become the means of expression for all those seeking a better understanding of emigration, completing the socio-historical perspective by focusing on the individual experience.

The importance of identity becomes even more prominent in the case of second- or third-generation immigrants. One such example is provided by the Norwegian TV series *Alt for Norge* ("All for Norway"), a production that involved Norwegian-Americans who returned to the homeland to discover their roots. The immigration experience of their forefathers more than a hundred years ago is brought to life through the very letters that have travelled for months from the New World to the Norwegian shores. The America letters that were the sole contact between members of the same family divided by the Atlantic Ocean are now used to create bonds between relatives living on different continents, raising awareness of the immigrant life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, revealing that the questions of identity and belonging are as valid today as they were in the 1900s. Furthermore, another dimension to consider when it comes to the visibility of this research topic is its relevance for understanding the multicultural

society in which many of us live. When referring to Norway, "although the context and conditions can be very different in many ways, I believe that things such as uprooting, displacement and cultural conflicts in the new society have not changed that much for the people involved."[2] (Kongslien, 1989, 14). The questions of identity, the immigrants' need to belong are the same for the twenty-first-century immigrants as they were for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigrants.

METHOD

The book is structured on a theoretical framework constructed on an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates a sociological analysis of the concept of identity and a historical perspective on migration into a qualitative analysis of immigrant narratives. Thus, in this discussion on the questions of immigrant identity and belonging, the selected immigrant narratives are closely analysed in order to render a mosaic picture of the immigrant experience stemming from a Norwegian-American perspective and a Romanian-American one.

Choice of texts

Three authors have been chosen for analysis in order to render a comprehensive and diverse perspective upon immigration as it was experienced by individuals. Ole Edvart Rølvaag writes in Norwegian for the Norwegian-Americans illustrating their struggle to preserve their identity as he depicts the hardships encountered by a family of Norwegian settlers in Dakota in a saga-like series of four novels, published in English translation as three volumes. He embodies the successful immigrant, since he left Norway for America as a fisherman, and succeeded in becoming university professor and writer. Knut Hamsun writes for the Norwegian and European audience after he returns from two unsuccessful attempts to bring poetry into the lives of his fellow Norwegian people who had chosen to leave the old continent for the New World. Hamsun's book is a documentary-like account of America, abounding in bitter evaluations of the cultural and spiritual life of a society he could not understand and in which he could not fit. Anișoara Stan intended to temporarily emigrate to America to ease her family's

[2] Own translation from: "Sjølv om omstenda og vilkåra på mange måtar kan vera ulike, trur eg at slike ting som å rive opp røtene, omplanting og kulturkonfliktar i det nye samfunnet ikkje har endra sef så mykje for dei menneska det gjeld." (Kongslien, 1989, 14).

economic situation, but also to promote the Romanian traditional folk art, being determined to show that each of the peoples that make up America has a cultural heritage that is worth known and that can be used to bring cohesion and tolerance to a culturally-diverse environment. She eventually remained in America, and wrote the autobiography of a visionary that dreamt of achieving world peace through a better understanding of the diverse cultures.

More than that, the immigrant experience does not differ immensely for immigrants, as they all go through more or less the same difficulties of adaptation, no matter their ethnicity.

STRUCTURE

Since this book focuses on various perceptions of the immigrant experience as they emerge from migration literature, with an additional historical overview of the Norwegian and Romanian immigration in America, its structure was designed to reflect this double perspective.

The first chapter opens the analysis by discussing the concepts of identity, cultural identity, ethnicity, and belonging in connection to immigration and migration literature. As the existing literature on the concept of identity in particular is extremely diverse, the first step will be to explore the valences of the term which are appropriate for the immigrant experience in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the elements pertaining to cultural identity and ethnicity will also be analysed with reference to the American migration. The immigrants' sense of belonging is an important dimension in this discussion as it reveals the costs of emigration, the dual existence of the immigrants, who struggle to find their place in the adoptive country and realise they no longer belong to their homeland, nor to the new one. Finally, the concepts of identity and belonging will further be linked to immigrant narratives that are analysed as reflections of immigrant experiences. Special attention will be given to the role of migration literature in the study of emigration due to the personal perspective it illustrates.

The second chapter presents a consistent historical overview of the Norwegian and the Romanian emigration to America, focusing on identifying correspondences between the emigration from the two marginal European countries. After an introductory part that describes the wider European

context of mass migration, the three subchapters focus first of all on the evolution of the emigration, with reference to the causes of the emigration, both socio-economic, demographic, and religious. The immigrant communities built by the two ethnic groups are also discussed, referring to the settlements they established, the immigrant organisations and their role, the churches and the schools, as well as the press. The last subchapter analyses the letters sent by the immigrants to the homeland, the so-called America letters, as they need particular emphasis for a comprehensive discussion on migration. These letters are first-hand accounts on the immigrant experience which, despite their inherent dose of subjectivity, were considered by their readers as the most reliable sources of information, as they were written by people they knew. More than that, America letters speak of the hardships, the longing, the joys of immigrant life, revealing how the difficulty of adjusting to a new culture was common to all immigrants, no matter where they came from. As Theodore C. Blegen observed,

> The nineteenth century witnessed a new discovery of America. It came about, not through the daring of a new Columbus, but as a consequence of letters written by immigrants to the people of the Old World. It was a progressive and widening discovery that played an important role in the migration of millions of Europeans from their home countries to the United States. (Blegen 1955, 3).

The role these letters played in the mass exodus to America is not to be overlooked, because they acted mostly as agents of emigration, convincing even the most suspicious minds that the opportunities found in the New World exceed by far the ones from the Old World. Some of these letters, on the contrary, exacerbated the costs of the emigration, disclosing the hard work, the struggles, and the longing.

The following chapters focus on the three writers selected for this research. Two of them are Norwegian, as the book focuses on Norwegian literature. It is also relevant to mention the fact that the Norwegian writers wrote their narratives in Norwegian, for the Norwegian-American community (Rølvaag), translating them into English soon after their publication in Norway, or for the Norwegians in the homeland, without the intention of translating them (Hamsun). Both versions have been quoted for a more reliable perspective. Hence, the third chapter analyses two of Ole Edvart Rølvaag's books on the immigrant experience: the novel *Giants in the Earth*

(1924-1925), which depicts the immigrant pioneer life on the Dakota prairie, and *Concerning Our Heritage* (1922), a collection of essays that reveal his belief that the Norwegian cultural identity, the cultural heritage needs to be preserved despite the desire to assimilate in the American culture. Reference is also made to *The Third Life of Per Smevik* (1912), the first volume Rølvaag published, as it completed the author's perception of the immigrant experience, as well as his strong attachment to his cultural heritage and to the Norwegian-American community.

Knut Hamsun is the second Norwegian writer discussed in this book. Hamsun made two voyages to America and experienced hardships, but did not succeed to integrate in the New World. However, his perspective on America and the status of the immigrant, different in many respects from that of Rølvaag's, is essential for a comprehensive overview of the immigrant experience as depicted in literature. Throughout the chapter reference is made to autobiographical data, as they come to enhance understanding of Hamsun's immigrant experience. Thus, the focus is on Hamsun's image of America as it emerges from *The Cultural Life of Modern America* (1889), a bitterly critic account of the cultural and spiritual life of the New World. Moreover, the American experience would exert influence on Hamsun's writing, hence, the analysis is followed by a discussion of some of the fiction he wrote, namely two sketches, Fear" and "On the Prairie" (1903), illustrative for the years he spent on the American prairie. In addition, his view on the American culture is traced through some of his letters and the article "Festina lente" (1928).

The immigrant experience that was illustrated by the Romanian writer Anișoara Stan comes to complete the multicultural tableau over the quest of identity revealed by this selection of immigrant narratives. Thus, Stan's *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947), the autobiography of a dreamer, is analysed in this book. Her perspective differs both chronologically, and culturally, as her experience was representative for that of most Romanians from Transylvania who left their traditional, rural milieu to settle in large industrial cities in America. Anișoara Stan is driven by her dream of promoting world peace thorough awareness of the cultural diversity of all peoples. Her autobiography illustrates in a somewhat romantic manner her love for the Romanian folk art and traditions, for the peasant that leads a peaceful existence, in harmony with nature, but also how the reminiscences of the Old World culture, as well as the preservation of the cultural heritage

can bring cohesion within an immigrant community, making it distinct and appreciated in the larger American culture.

Concluding Remarks

The narratives analysed here reveal that emigration in the 1900s was an experience that posed many challenges to those who ventured to unknown shores in pursuit of the American dream. Torn from the familiar surroundings of their homeland, separated from family and loved ones, the immigrants found themselves foreign in a foreign land, surrounded by foreigners of all cultures. As they started building their new life in the New World, their struggle was to find their place while trying not to lose their identity. In return, they gained a twofold identity that was both enriching and disquieting. If historians focused on offering objective accounts of what emigration entailed, the writers told the personal stories of migration, completing the picture of a phenomenon that is inherent to human nature. In the end, we gain a holistic perspective on the condition of immigrant in those times.

CHAPTER 1
IDENTITY, BELONGING, MIGRATION LITERATURE

This chapter will analyse the concepts of identity and belonging in relation to migration literature. These concepts are discussed below with reference to culture in order to understand the framework within which the immigrant narratives were written.

The first subchapter[3] will discuss the concept of identity as it emerges from the widely accepted theories, whereas the second subchapter will focus on the concept of cultural identity in relation to immigration and on the immigrants' sense of belonging. The last subchapter will connect these concepts to migration literature, focusing on the role of immigrant narratives both in terms of expressing the immigrant experience and of contributing to the preservation of the homeland cultural heritage.

The decision to emigrate entails a great deal of courage to venture to cross an ocean, to live in a completely different environment, to become accustomed to a new way of life, a new language, a new culture. Naturally, the emigrants were driven by the need for a better material life or by the desire to accomplish more than what the homeland boundaries could permit. Armed with high expectations and ambition, they embarked on a perilous voyage, on a quest for self-determination. Nevertheless, the immigrant experience consists of more than just material betterment. The uprootedness from the land of the forefathers, the adaptation to a new environment, a new language, a new way of life, to a completely different culture generates conflicts and questions of identity and belonging. Once they found themselves in a foreign country, the immigrants began to analyse their decision to emigrate, to feel

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[3] The first and the second subchapters are based on the article "Exploring Immigrant Identity. A Sense of Belonging", Mureşan, Ioana-Andreea, in *PhD Studies in Norwegian Literature*, eds. Sanda Tomescu Baciu, Fartein Th. Øverland, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Raluca-Daniela Răduţ, Raluca Pop, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2020, pp. 135-146.

the distance between themselves and their relatives, questioning their place, their identity and their belonging to the homeland and to the new land. Their experience could only be understood by those who emigrated, as they no longer belonged to the homeland, nor fully to the adoptive land, as Ole Edvart Rølvaag well observed. The traits that, combined, make up one's identity, from a psychological point of view, are the elements that provide uniqueness and distinctiveness from others, but that also enhance connections with those that are similar. Hence, identity is the fine balance between the elements that isolate and those that unite individuals, and, naturally, this balance is rooted in culture, as identity is shaped by the cultural environment. Identifying with a certain culture provides security and gives us a sense of belonging, so cultural identity is essential for one's wellbeing. Uprootedness shatters the balance between the physical and metaphysical environment, generating insecurity and disorientation.

The quest for identity as it emerges from Norwegian- and Romanian-American narratives is central for this research, but the discussion ought to begin with an analysis of the meanings associated to the concepts of identity and belonging within the framework of immigrant life. Searching through the huge amount of literature focusing on identity is no easy undertaking, but it is necessary to distinguish between the many valences of identity, which reveal how important it is for us humans to feel anchored. The theme will be analysed in the context of immigrant experiences in relation to the immigrants' sense of belonging, whereas migration literature as a reflection of the acculturation process the departed go through is the central focus of this book.

WHO AM I? A FEW CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

The concept of identity and its manifold interpretations will be discussed in this subchapter, with the purpose of identifying the meanings that are closer to immigrant identity. Without claiming a thorough knowledge of the various directions in which the concept has been analysed, the ones that are useful for this research have been filtered, underlying from the very beginning that identity was not perceived by nineteenth-century-immigrants the way we understand the concept today. As James D. Fearon observed, identity is a new concept, "not something that people have eternally needed or sought as

such.", and they use different terms to indicate the way of establishing, defending or protecting their identities (Fearon, 1999, 10).

There is extensive literature on the concept of identity, as stated from the very beginning of this endeavour. Obviously, this generates difficulties in choosing the most suitable views on the subject. Moreover, the transversal, interdisciplinary character of the concept, encompassing a variety of perspectives due to debates in psychology, social anthropology, history, philosophy, can further entangle the directions followed by the scholar. The various ways in which identity was explored reveal the difficulty of elucidating such an abstract and virtual concept. Considering the divergent paths taken by sometimes by theorists, it is necessary to bear in mind that "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think" (Hall, 1990, 222), and it can be misinterpreted despite the many approaches.

Erik H. Erikson, a psychologist, was the first to concentrate on the concept of identity starting from the discussion on what it means to be American, suggesting that questions of identity, the concepts of identity and identity crisis emerged from the very experience of immigration. An immigrant himself, he considered that "Identity problems were in the mental baggage of generations of new Americans, who left their motherlands and fatherlands behind to merge their ancestral identities in the common one of self-made men.". Furthermore, Erikson admits emigration can be difficult and heartless "in terms of what is abandoned in the old country and what is usurped in the new one" (Erikson, 1970, 748). Thus, he distinguished between the ego identity, or the self, the personal identity, the set of traits that singularize an individual from the other, and the social or cultural identity, namely the social roles played by an individual.

Starting from Erikson's vision on identity, anthropologists have focused on the traits and characteristics that render uniqueness to an individual, that distinguish her or him from the others, and the related concept of ethnicity also played an important role. Hence, identity as coined by Erikson, remained dominant, so the concept continued to be used in a socio-historical manner of focusing on the characteristics that provide cohesion within a group, on sameness, seen rather as similar and not necessarily with a unifying dimension. Moreover, there are two main approaches regarding the character of the concept. One approach sees identity and belonging to a group as fixed, based on ancestry and common biological traits, whereas a

second approach questions identity as fixed, as a natural given, and considers identity as formed by choice. Fearon, as well as Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue that the concept of identity needs clarification, and that many scholars tend to abide by their preconceptions of identity and avoid taking into account the way in which identity emerges as reality. Moreover, the sociologist Klaus Eder concentrates on collective identity, the belonging to a group shared with others, and believes in a better use of the concept as the more societies are differentiated, the more they need collective identity. Yet, building on the concept of identity, the concept of cultural identity stems from the important role played by culture in the shaping of identity. The sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall discussed the concept of cultural identity by stressing the relevance of our cultural background for our identity. In his view, cultural identity is fluid and ever-changing, constantly shaped by life experiences, a sort of collective self that is shared by people that have the same ancestry and history. In addition, Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial approach focuses on the ambivalence of culture.

Fearon performs a language analysis of the meanings of 'identity and he considers the concept requires clarifications due to its many uses in various areas. He claims that, in order to show how identity is socially constructed and historically contingent it is necessary to work with a concept of identity that applies both transhistorically and transculturally (Fearon, 1999, 10). Yet, there is more to take into account, and a better understanding should begin with a discussion on the term as it first emerged.

Erik H. Erikson, the reputed psychologist and psychoanalyst, considered as the father of "identity" and "identity crisis", highlights the complexity of the concept and stresses that identity formation, in psychological terms, makes use of a process of concomitant reflection and observation. Hence, this process allows the individual to judge himself "in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him." It is necessary to mention that this process is unconscious, except for situations when a combination between the interior conditions and the exterior circumstances "aggravate a painful, or elated, "identity consciousness". (Erikson, 1968, 22-23).

Identity is thus seen by Erikson as a unified concept that has both individual and social dimensions, because our identity is shaped by the way others perceive ourselves. Fearon also supports this view and mentions that the term 'identity' has two intertwined meanings and that the force of the concept relies on how these meanings intertwine (Fearon, 1999, 10). He then analyses the differences between personal identity and social identity, considering personal identity to be "a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways" and completes the assertion by referring to the fact that the individual may either take pride in these attributes, or may take no special pride in them, but acts according to them and feels lost without them, while the individual may simply feel she or he cannot change despite the desire to change (Fearon, 1999, 25).

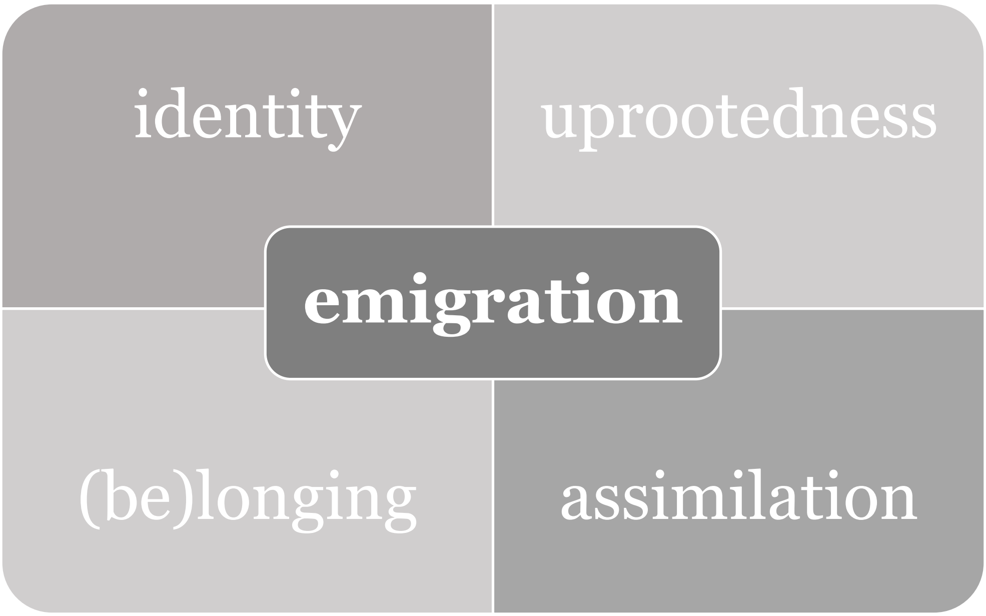


Figure 1. ***The concepts tackled in this research***

Discussions and debates on identity have become overwhelming, too present in social sciences and humanities. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper rebuke such extensive use of the term and focus on the social dimension of identity, which, understood as a collective phenomenon, they argue, denotes sameness among the individuals pertaining to a group. Further on, they

consider sameness is expected to be expressed through solidarity or shared action. Identity perceived as a fundamental condition of a social being is an indicator of something basic, foundational, deep, in contrast with the more superficial and contingent attributes of the self, being thus "understood as something to be valued, cultivated, supported, recognized, and preserved" (Brubaker, Cooper, 2000, 7).

The relation between individual and society lies at the basis of identity, which acts as a mirror, revealing the individual in the way others perceive her or him, but also what distinguishes him from others. Identity acts hence as a bridge between the personal and the public worlds (Hall, 1992, 276), but not as something fixed, unchangeable, as it is "always changing and developing: at its best it is a process of increasing differentiation, and it becomes ever more inclusive as the individual grows aware of a widening circle of others significant to him." (Erikson, 1968, 23). In addition, because of its fluid character, it is necessary to discuss identity as a contrasting phenomenon, not as a unified cultural concept.

As the focus is shifted to social or collective identity, Klaus Eder considers we need to make better use of the concept, as "The more a human society is differentiated, the more it needs a collective identity." (Eder, 2009, 430). Collective identities are thus defined as social constructions that utilise psychological need and motives in an attempt to answer questions such as *who do I belong to?* or *who do we belong to?* (Eder, 2009, 431). This eventually leads to discussions on ethnicity, which entails identifying a group starting from a set of cultural characteristics that are specific to all its members.

Ethnicity is regarded by anthropologists as a social and cultural construct, which makes it necessary to explain perception of identities as the outcome of a specific social, cultural milieu. Moreover, ethnicity is grounded on shared ancestry, cultural traditions and language, used in relation to the cultural identity of a group of people. When discussing the ethnic groups in America, Glazer and Moynihan observe how the ethnic groups in America were transformed by various influences, but then recreated as something new, still as identifiable groups. As individuals think of themselves as members of a particular group with a particular name, they come to be considered by others as members of that group, being ultimately linked to the other members of the group with attributes that they, as original immigrants,

couldn't have recognized as pertaining to their group. These new attributes distinguish the immigrants in the third-generation and even beyond by more than just name and association Glazer & Moynihan 1964, 13). Nevertheless, Sollors argues that ethnicity is not necessarily the most suitable term for defining the concept, and considers that ethnicity may function as a construct that evokes nature, blood, and descent in American social symbolism, while national identity may be connected to law, conduct, and consent (Sollors, 1986, 151).

Writing about the concept of identity from a historical perspective, Johan Schimanski highlights how "the concept wanders between different antipoles: individual/collective, constructed/ essentialist"[4] (Schimanski, 2001, 59-60). However, identity has long been defined starting from similarities, but Stuart Hall argues that it is a marker of difference and exclusion rather than "the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity" (Hall, 1996, 4).

All in all, the concept of identity is difficult to grasp because of its many valences, because of its complexity, as well as contradictions. Its dynamism stems from the interaction between individual and others, but also from its ambivalent nature, as it points to differences and sameness, to particular and common characteristics, being all the time influenced by environment, by context, by life experiences. It is all the more relevant to analyse the concept in relation to immigration, as the process of forging an identity is poignant in the case of immigrants.

Perhaps the most comprehensive explanation of the concept was given by Rosemary C. Salomone, who observes how identity "suggests one's sense of belonging to a group, within a larger culture, united by shared customs, values, behavioural roles, language, and rules of social interaction tied to a common ancestry" (Salomone, 2010, 70).

Hence, this book grounds the analysis of the chosen narratives in the concept of identity seen, on the one hand, as a process influenced by immigration, by the uprooting from the home culture, and, on the other hand, as a process analysed in relation to the self and to the others. Identity will be discussed as

[4] Original text in Norwegian: "Identitetsbegrepet har en historie. I denne historien vandrer begrepet mellom forskjellige motpoler: individuellt/kollektivt, konstruert/essensialistisk." (Schimanski, 2001, 59-60).

a fluid phenomenon that undergoes constant change due to the exposure to different cultural environments. The purpose is to highlight its fluent character under the influence of both external and internal factors, all the time in connection to the immigrant experience. This fluid character of identity can be understood from the influence of external factors, for a macrolevel perspective, as one's identity is liable to change due to immigration by being uprooted from one's home culture, but it is also an inner process, under the influence of inner factors, since it triggers a repositioning and understanding of the self in relation to the other.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND IMMIGRATION. IMMIGRANTS AND BELONGING

This subchapter will discuss the concept of identity and cultural identity in connection to immigration. A second concept will be introduced, namely belonging, with a focus on its role in the immigrant experience. Several perspectives on cultural identity and belonging are presented further on for a better understanding of how immigration was perceived in the light of the cultural background of each immigrant.

A first perspective is provided by Stuart Hall who begins his study *Culture and Diaspora* by stating that "we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', *positioned*." (Hall, 1994, 222), suggesting that our cultural background is the cradle of our identity, as culture determines who we are in a tremendous way.

Moreover, as shown above, identity reflects people's need to define themselves (Versluys, 2007, 90), although not as an independent reality that exists outside the individual, but as constructed by the individual (Versluys, 2007, 92). Cultural identity is, on the other hand, "a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common." (Hall, 1992, 223), and these shared cultural codes represent stable frames of reference and meaning, providing 'oneness' to individuals (Hall, 1992, 223). Thus, cultural identity is an anchor that fosters connections between individuals, offering stability.

Stuart Hall comes with a second view on cultural identity, one that analyses differences, not similarities, discontinuities, not sameness: "Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture (Hall, 1992, 225). He also argues that cultural identity is not stable, nor fixed, but it is a production in process, never complete, "constituted within, not outside, representation." (Hall, 1992, 222). As Heraclitus of Ephesus also believed, life is constantly changing, an incessant flow is at the essence of life, as we can never bathe in the same river again, since the water flows constantly, never ceasing, never the same. In a similar fashion, cultural identities undergo constant transformation, being "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 1992, 225).

The archetype of the tree of life, present in many mythologies and traditions, is relevant for this discussion, as identity resembles the sacred tree Yggdrasil (in the Norse mythology), that connects all forms of life, with strong roots that go deep into the soil, the roots that carry the legacy from our ancestors, whereas the branches go further to heavens, carrying that legacy to distant shores, growing constantly on the experiences and memories that shape us, "always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth." (Hall, 1992, 226).

The idea that identity is constantly changing and developing is acknowledged by Amin Maalouf, who believes the influence of those around him – who either choose to include or to exclude him – is what determines an individual's affiliation to a certain group. The individual acquires his identity little by little, becoming what he is rather than growing aware of what he is (Maalouf, 2000, 21). Dan Gilbert, social psychologist and writer, shares this view, considering that "human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they're finished. The person you are right now is as transient, as fleeting and as temporary as all the people you've ever been. The one constant in our life is change." (Gilbert, 2014). Change is, thus, the one constant when it comes to our life, to our identities, as we are continuously transformed by our experiences and encounters.

Change is inherent in the case of immigrants, because, as indicated above, cultural identity is flexible, it undergoes changes, it is work in progress, being acquired through encounters, etc. For these reasons, most immigrants deal

with difficulties during their acculturation, the process of adapting to the adoptive culture, particularly as they find themselves torn between the desire to preserve their homeland culture and the need to adapt, to find their place in their new country. Their inner struggle, the personal stories of migration that reveal the immigrants' quest for identity, their need to belong, provide a better understanding of the difficulties of adaptation and integration, allowing us to grasp the deep implications of the incessant migrations.

Immigration, Maalouf suggests when referring to his life story, has a great influence on the individual, as his identity is enriched by the additional cultural experience, underlining that "What makes me myself rather than anyone else is the very fact that I am poised between two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity. Would I exist more authentically if I cut off a part of myself?" (Maalouf, 2000, 3). His more modern approach on identity is also useful for this discussion as he highlights how cultural differences generate misunderstandings, but, at the same time, belonging to more than one culture contributes to a more complex identity. However, identity, he claims, cannot be compartmentalised. Moreover, he criticises the fact that deeply rooted habits and simplistic attitudes tend to reduce identity to one affiliation, but identity is made up of a series of elements that combine uniquely within each individual, preventing him "from being identical to anybody else." (Maalouf, 2000, 10). Maalouf also distinguishes between two heritages that can be found within each individual: a 'vertical' heritage, stemming from the ancestors, the religious community and the traditions, and a 'horizontal' heritage that comes from the contemporaries and the age, which, he argues, exerts more influence, despite the fact that we invoke more frequently the first one (Maalouf, 2000, 86). Norwegian-Americans, in their attempt to create homemaking-myths that could account for their place in the larger American culture, have often referred to their Viking ancestors, stressing the vertical heritage.

As mentioned before, the concept of identity is not always comprehensive enough to encompass all the aspects of the self, especially when referring to migration. There is, however, a "return to the performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration." (Bhabha, 2004, 12), but the concept of belonging needs to be discussed as a complementary dimension. Floya Anthias discusses belonging and considers it "is always in relation to

something outside the self (a place – in the social as well as geographical sense – and is therefore always 'located')", whereas identity has been seen as "that which defines 'who they are' or 'who they think they are' as well as entailing the construction of bonds with 'similar' others" (Anthias, 2013, 7). Furthermore, at a superficial level, belonging could mean being 'at home' (Jones&Krzyzanowski, 2011, 41), yet, the fact that "it can be defined with sufficient precision to take account of the transient nature of many of the processes associated with the formation of identities" (Jones&Krzyzanowski, 2011, 42) provides it with strength.

Immigrants are those that can speak of identity, of belonging from the perspective of the insider, as, born in a culture, they decide to live in another culture and face all the hardships arising from this process. In their quest for finding their place, as Rølvaag well observed, they feel that they no longer belong to their homeland, nor entirely to their new country, and both those left behind and those to whom they went consider them strangers (*The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 126). Moreover, emigration required sacrifices: leaving the familiar surroundings in which they were born, migrants separated from their families. The state of insecurity that emigration creates leads to questions of identity (Bauman, 1996, 19). Hence, we begin to wonder who we are whenever we find ourselves in situations of uncertainty, when we are not sure which path to choose, how to place ourselves among the various behavioural styles and patterns, or "how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence". Yet, identity provides stability and escape from uncertainty (Bauman, 1996, 19), as it connects the individual with the outer world.

Oscar Handlin was among the first who focused on these sacrifices, highlighting the negative effects of uprooting. From the beginning of his endeavour he realised that immigrants were American history (Handlin, 1973, 3), that emigration had a strong impact on their lives by taking them out of their traditional environments and replanting them among strangers. In the strange environment they found themselves, the old ways did not fit, so they were faced with different life problems. "With old ties snapped, men faced the enormous compulsion of working out new relationships, new meanings to their lives, often under harsh and hostile circumstances." (Handlin, 1973, 5), he admits. Hence, to the struggle for survival, the struggle to learn a new language and new ways of living only added to their burdens.

Handlin's analysis continues to focus on the difficulties the immigrants were dealing with. They went through a shock that persisted for many years, as Handlin remarks (Handlin, 1973, 6). With an American universe so different from the world they had known, "strangers, the immigrants could not locate themselves; they had lost the polestar that gave them their bearings. They would not regain an awareness of direction until they could visualize themselves in their new context." (Handlin, 1973, 85). To cope with this challenge, the relation to the homeland was critical. This concept has a highly imaginative and poetic force as it connotes belonging and identity. Through this poetical force, Stråth claims, homeland has succeeded to connect "dreams of a utopian past with images of a better future" (Stråth, 2011, 26). Stuart Hall also observed the importance of the homeland, as the New World is a narrative of displacement that fuels the desire "to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning." (Hall, 1990, 236).

With the homeland behind, the immigrant needed to build a new home in a new world, in the land of immigrants, as it is often referred to. Some claim that the United States of America have appropriated the adjective 'America' despite the fact that the Americans can claim no exclusivity over the term (Walzer, 2004, 633). Walzer's view of America is that of an association of citizens that are free to preserve the identities they had before emigrating (Walzer, 2004, 636). These ideas are supported by Michael Dorris, as well as Jay Parini and Robert Pack, who observe that home can have many answers in the course of an American's lifetimes due to the frequent relocations (Dorris, 1994, 60) and that the metaphor of the American melting pot has become obsolete once ethnic groups merge as specific categories (Parini, Pack, 1994, ix). The fleeting character of the American life hence left its mark on the identities of its citizens.

Handlin sees the immigrants in America as "wanderers to the wide world and often yearn toward the far direction whence they have come", with a vivid image of the homeland in their mind: "Can ever a man feel really happy condemned to live away from where he was born? Though by leaving he has cut himself off and knows he never will return, yet he hopes, by reaching backward, still to belong in the homeland." (Handlin, 1973, 231-232). The sense of belonging becomes vital and is perhaps first acknowledged when emigrating. Uprooting, as Handlin shows, generates insecurity and yearning, while Salomone emphasizes the costs paid by immigrants in order to reinvent

themselves in a new and unfamiliar land: "Only someone who has lived through it can fully appreciate what it takes to reinvent oneself in a new land with unfamiliar cultural norms and expectations, to face the constant pressure to let go and blend in despite the inner urge to resist, hold on, and remain distinct." (Salomone, 2010, 70). As others before her, Salomone stresses the unique character of the immigrant experience and how only those who experienced emigration themselves can truly understand its implications.

Harold P. Simonson also discusses uprootedness, comparing it to a state of crisis, because we are created to feel connected, and all humans share a thirst for being, we all require a place that we can call home. In this sense, moving from a place to another means abandoning one's world and risking alienation (Simonson, 1983).

Immigrants and (Be)longing

"When nothing more could be seen but a low, rugged cloud bank, I went below, crept into my bunk and bawled like a whipped child. That was my farewell to the Fatherland" (Rølvaag, *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 20). This is the confession of young Rølvaag who emigrated from Norway to America in 1896. His words reveal the bitter side of emigration: the separation from the homeland and from the family. This separation leads to longing for what has been lost, but also to questions regarding one's place in the world, revealing our sense of belonging.

There are two sides of the belonging issues in the case of immigrants: on the one hand, they experience alienation from their loved ones, from the familiar surroundings of their homeland, on the other hand, they experience alienation as foreigners in a completely new milieu, in a completely new culture, with a different language and different ways of living. In order to ease the feeling of alienation in their new country, they need to adapt by learning the language of their country, by adjusting to their new culture. However, this process of adjusting, acculturation, comes with the cost of getting even more alienated from their homeland and their home culture. The inner conflicts arise from their attempt to maintain a balance between their cultural background and the new culture they have decided to embrace.

The image of the immigrant seen as a stranger that Rølvaag described in his narratives, was suggested by Orm Øverland as well. Thus, he considers that this characterization of the immigrant as foreign has been a fact for numerous first- and second-generation Americans coming from a European country, except for those coming from the United Kingdom. He further argues that "migrations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made European immigrants foreigners in an absolute sense" (Øverland, 2000, 1). Speakers of a different language, stemming from different cultures, the immigrants were perceived as foreigners and felt foreign in their new country.

Alienation, naturally, generated questions of identity and belonging. Marco Antonisch puts forth the idea that the discussion on the concept of belonging should concentrate on belonging as the feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging seen as "a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)." (Antonisch, 2010). Moreover, Antonisch argues, it is important that "one's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place and which inexorably conditions one's sense of place-belongingness." (Antonisch, 2010). Thus, we cannot feel at home in a place if we are not welcomed and accepted by the others, because belonging to a place is belonging to a group of people (Antonisch, 2010). Immigrants needed to integrate, to no longer be perceived as foreigners in order to be able to belong to their new country.

As mentioned above, in a foreign world, among foreign people speaking a foreign language, immigrants found solace in the idea of the homeland, a familiar image that gave them a sense of belonging. The struggle to find their place, the inner conflicts generated by alienation, the fear of not being accepted, the fear for the future, homesickness and the fear they might never see their family in the homeland again, all contributed to a growing instability. Yet, their faith in God, the solidarity within their ethnic group, the prospects of a better material life than the one they had in the homeland and for a better future for their children were the incentives that made them continue to strive to accomplish their American dream, to try to build their home away from home.

IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES AS REFLECTIONS OF THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

This last subchapter will underline the importance of immigrant narratives as reflections of American immigrant life experiences, representative for how they managed to adapt to a new world while trying to preserve their identity. A discussion on the role played by migration literature will be followed by a brief overview of the most known Scandinavian-American immigrant writers.

It is necessary to highlight the deep implications of immigration and how the immigrants needed to share their life-changing experience. Still, acculturation and modernization are far more complex than one might think, working "in more complicated ways than by literary diffusion from more modern American mainstream to more traditional ethnic group" that provide the opportunity for immigrant (or ethnic) literature to 'mature' and make immigrant writers 'wholly American' (Sollors, 1986, 248). This complexity of acculturation was depicted in migration literature, with focus on the individual level. There is more to immigration than the accomplishment of the American dream and little accent was put on the inner conflicts the immigrants were dealing with: "The immigrant experience brought something new to the American scene; it brought a contrast between the security of the past and the vulnerability of the present, and between not only a lost country but a lost youth on the one hand and pragmatic actualities on the other." (Simonson, 1983). This contrast between the past and present life of the immigrants lies at the core of the immigrant experience, and the books written by immigrants describe much of this experience. Migration literature, Ingeborg Kongslien believes, is highly relevant for a better understanding of the past. Besides its aesthetic role, this literature contributes to a reconstruction of the past, providing first-hand perceptions of the emigration while it reaches far more readers than historical productions on immigration, shaping people's image of the emigration (Kongslien, 1989, 13).

The experience of immigration is a complex phenomenon, and migration literature can offer powerful insights into the nature of this phenomenon. Addressing some gaps in sociological approaches to migration (Burge, 2020, 5), migration literature discusses the migration-related issues, such as place perception, displacement and transformation, nostalgia, family

relationships, self-denial or self-discovery in a direct way. Moreover, insights such as these "are often infinitely more subtle and meaningful than studies of migrants which base themselves on cold statistics or on the depersonalised, aggregate responses to questionnaire surveys" (King, Connell, and White, 1995, x). Thus, migration literature comes with a humanized perspective on the study of migration, focusing on how immigrants experience feelings of alienation, living permanently on the run, thinking of the homeland and of returning, but realising "at the same time the impossibility of doing so, since the past is not only another country but also another time, out of the present" (King, Connell, and White, 1995, xv). The conflicts inherent to the immigrant experience are presented through immigrant narratives from a subjective, yet more personal and human point of view.

In addition to conveying "knowledge and impression through their images and interpretations", migration literature, immigrant novels in particular, have greatly influenced people's perception of the emigration[5] (Kongslien, 1989, 13-14). Literature also focuses on details, mirroring immigrant life, but it also provides an image of the forces that motivated movements, of the psychological aspects in this process of displacement and adaptation (Kongslien, 1989, 15). These fictional texts, Kongslien continues, are about human experiences, showing the individual, who is seen as member of a group, in line with the historical conditions. These texts "become thus not mere depictions of individual destinies, but interpretations of a social reality and of historical experiences."[6] (Kongslien, 1989, 16). The migration literature provided, hence, interpretations of the reality and of historical truth, whilst, as previously mentioned, it does not claim to illustrate the objective truth, as historical sources do.

It is equally important to discuss the concept of migration literature, and, in this respect, the evolutionary series of its forms as envisioned by Connell, King and White are highly useful. The first phase in their model refers to 'pre-literatures', such as ethnic newsletters or community newspapers, which oftentimes are means of holding on to past identities, but also letters, diaries,

[5] Own translation from Norwegian: "kunnskap og inntrykk gjennom bileta og fortolkingane sine" (Kongslien, 1989, 13-14).
[6] Own translation from Norwegian: "Tekstane blir slik ikkje berre skildringar av individuelle lagnader, men fortolkingar av ein sosial røyndom og av historiske erfaringar." (Kongslien, 1989, 16).

songs and other oral narratives[7]. They argue that pre-literatures have been "condemned as rudimentary and naïve", despite their true value as evidence in the reconstruction of the immigrant experience. Further on, these texts give way to poems, short stories and reportage, usually in the mother tongue, published in newspapers and magazines belonging to the ethnic group, and can be considered as a form of therapy, records in simple, often autobiographical forms. Connell, King and White observe that these texts, autobiographies and other first-hand accounts have value, but are not necessarily regarded as such because of their fleeting character in terms of chronology or because of the strong influence exerted by the existing cultural forms. The third stage of their model refers to more sophisticated narratives such as complex novels, plays, films and poetry, which are written in the languages of the dominant powers that have absorbed the immigrants, namely English, French, German and others. In this case, the authors of the texts are mostly of migrant ancestry, professional writers that tackle various migration-themes, starting with portraying the direct immigrant encounters and ending with the more complex issues of ambivalence and questions of identity generated by cultural confrontation. Lastly, the fourth phase they suggest sees a reversal in this linkage, as migrants or writers with a background of immigrant experience start to play a more prominent role in the development of the former 'pure' national and international literatures, "theirs are the literatures of post-migration" (King, Connell, and White, 1995, xi-xiii). This model of the forms of migration literature sheds light on the various classifications of the narratives that can be considered as migration literature, revealing the unequal treatment of many of these sources that have been largely considered less valuable for the study of migration.

Before continuing with the analysis of the role of migration literature, it is relevant to illustrate how the authors themselves perceived their writing. Hence, Mary Antin discloses the impact of her immigrant experience, referring also to the liberating, therapeutic character of her autobiography:

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[7] Most of the Romanian literature in America belonged to this category, as Theodore Andrica observes: "Lack of English and nostalgia for their home villages and families contributed greatly to making the new Romanian immigrants feel isolated and ignored in America. Early immigrant literature printed in almanacs and newspapers reflected almost exclusively the nostalgia of the Romanian immigrants for the green valleys and modest villages in the Old Country." (Andrica, 1977, 42-43).

> All the processes of uprooting, transportation, replanting, acclimatization, and development took place in my own soul. I felt the pang, the fear, the wonder, and the joy of it. I can never forget, for I bear the scars. But I want to forget – sometimes I long to forget. I think I have thoroughly assimilated my past – I have done its bidding – I want now to be of to-day. It is painful to be consciously of two worlds. The Wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness. I am not afraid to live on and on, if only I do not have to remember too much. A long past vividly remembered is like a heavy garment that clings to your limbs when you would run. And I have thought of a charm that should release me from the folds of my clinging past. I take the hint from the Ancient Mariner, who told his tale in order to be rid of it. I, too, will tell my tale, for once, and never hark back any more. I will write a bold *Finis* at the end, and shut the book with a bang! (Antin, 1912, xiv-xv).

Antin acknowledges the deep complexity of the feelings she experienced as she assimilated her Jewish-Russian past, revealing the pain of being conscious of two worlds. This dual perspective is remarked by Kongslien, who stresses how the characters in the migration literature exist in the perspective of the world they left and that of the world they came to (Kongslien, 1989, 16). Gulliksen also shares the idea of 'twoness', as the migrant writers lived in two different worlds, possessing "a uniquely dual experience" (Gulliksen, 2004, 2). Returning to Antin's case, she chooses to heal from the painful experience of the clinging past by writing her autobiography, *The Promised Land*.

Other immigrant writers, such as Constantine Panunzio, lays emphasis on the inner struggles of the immigrant, focusing on the bitterness of the immigrant experience:

> Again, this tale depicts the inner, the soul struggles of the immigrant more than his outward success or failure. It tells of the agonies and the Calvaries, of the bitter sorrows and the high joys of an immigrant soul; it traces the liberation of a mind from the conceptions it brought from the Old World and pictures its development into the American consciousness. Not outward poverty, degradation, misery; but inner conflict, soul-struggles are here primarily depicted. (Panunzio, 1921, xi-xii).

Panunzio warns the readers that his interest does not target the outward success or failure, but the agonies, bitter sorrows, as well as the joys of an

immigrant, tracing his transformation from a man under the influence of the Old World conceptions into a man with an American conscience.

One of the first to study the immigrant experience of Scandinavians in America was Dorothy Burton Skårdal, who analysed the way in which literature portrayed the immigrants' struggle to integrate in a foreign culture, how the confrontation between his homeland culture and the culture of the adoptive country determined a "painful personal change", which is "common and central to all immigrant experience" (Burton Skårdal, 1974, 20). However, she argues, the immigrant writers faced more complex problems than those who wrote and published in their home country as they found themselves in an American environment, but they saw it with European eyes, treating it with European concepts. They first focused, Burton Skårdal continues, on highlighting the stark contrast between the two worlds, and only with time, as their initial conceptions changed, did they learn to interpret and be aware of the transformation they were undergoing (Burton Skårdal, 1974, 20).

In her analysis of the Scandinavian-American migration literature, Kongslien observes the large literary production written in Scandinavian languages, most of it published at Scandinavian-American publishing houses, the genres ranging from poetry, short-stories, novels, autobiographies to document- and report-types. She also remarks the real interest for this literature in the Scandinavian area, but also the complexity of the narratives that goes beyond the historical and social reference frameworks, as they provide manifold interpretations of the emigration process (Kongslien, 1989, 19-22). Kongslien also mentions the most significant Norwegian-American writers, namely Waldemar Ager, Johannes B. Wist and Simon Johnson, whereas Ole Edvart Rølvaag was the only one to achieve recognition beyond his own ethnic group. Øverland considers that these writers of *Vesterheimen* ("The Western Home") – term used to refer to the Norwegian-American environment –, made their native language, Norwegian, an American literary language as it was the "language in which they could express American experience to an American audience", creating a collective record of the emotional and social life of the Norwegian-American ethnic group (Øverland, 1996, 380) on its way to assimilation and integration within the larger American culture. However, this opinion can be considered far-fetched, as these authors wrote for the Norwegian-American immigrant community they were part of, providing a double cultural

perspective that is unique precisely because it was not entirely American, nor entirely Norwegian.

However, other Scandinavian writers did not emigrate, but wrote about the emigration of Scandinavians to America achieved great success: Johan Bojer wrote *Vor egen stamme* (1924, translated into English as *The Emigrants*, 1925), Vilhem Moberg, the Swedish author, is associated with his series *Utvandrarna* (*The Emigrants*), four books on the Swedish emigration to America published between 1949 and 1959, and Alfred Hauge is best known for his trilogy from the 1960s on Cleng Peerson, the Norwegian immigrant pioneer in America. More recently, Edvard Hoem published four volumes – *Slåttekar i himmelen* ("Haymaker in Heaven", 2014), *Bror din på prærien* ("Your Brother on the Prairie", 2015), *Land ingen har sett* ("A Land No One Has Seen", 2016), and *Liv andre har levd* ("Lives Others Have Lived", 2017) – in which he recreates and narrates his Norwegian-American family saga, depicting the journey of the immigrants through the filter of today's descendant. This reveals once again the tremendous amount of interest regarding the immigrant experience and migration literature that has become almost universal during the last decades.

For a comprehensive image of the immigrants' quest for identity as it emerges from the immigrant narratives, I have chosen to discuss three different authors, two Norwegian authors with contrasting immigration experiences, Rølvaag (who became a writer in the New World) and Hamsun (who intended to bring poetry into the lives of Norwegians in America, but returned to the homeland), while the last writer is Anișoara Stan, Romanian-American, mostly known for the Romanian cook book she published, and less known for the novel which I chose to analyse, namely *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947), the autobiography of a dreamer and visionary. The choice was to focus, hence, on the personal stories of migration to which many can relate to, because, as Edvard Hoem mentioned during the interview taken in 2018, "what perhaps is best depicted in a novel are the dreams people had and things like that, which is difficult to relate to in the context of an exact science."[8] (Hoem, 2018).

[8] Own translation from Norwegian: "Men det som kanskje kommer bedre fram i en roman er drømmene folk hadde og slike ting, som det er litt vanskelig for en eksakt historievitenskap å forholde seg til." (Hoem, 2018).

Preliminary Conclusions

The concept of identity, together with its numerous valences, has been discussed in order to identify the dimensions which fit best the complex framework of immigrant identity. It was no easy task to find the way in a multitude of directions, but the focus was on the meanings that are closely related to ethnicity and identity as it was perceived by the nineteenth-century-immigrants. Moreover, the concept of cultural identity and its relation to the immigrant experience have also been tackled. Thus, the common ancestry, language and religion were key factors that connected individuals in what they perceived as cultural identity. In addition, the analysis focused also on the concept of belonging, which strikes a chord whenever discussions on immigration and assimilation emerge. Belonging needs to be connected to the concept of cultural identity for a better understanding of the influence of the immigrants' cultural background upon their perception of immigration. These concepts have been eventually connected to migration literature by discussing how immigrant narratives depicted the immigrant experience. These narratives – whether they are diaries, letters, newspaper articles, short stories, poems, novels (starting from the model provided by King, Connell, and White, 1995) – are valuable precisely because of their subjectivity, because of the personal dimension they reveal. More than that, these narratives contributed to the preservation of the cultural heritage the immigrants brought with them from the homeland, being at the same time representative for the way the immigrants succeeded to adapt to a new culture while trying to preserve their identity.

Migration literature is valuable because of the theme it focuses on, this deep-gripping human process with displacement, wandering and settling fuelled by a vision of freedom (Kongslien, 1989, 40). The immigrant writers depict a group of people experiencing separation from the familiar culture they have been born in followed by their assimilation in a culture they are not yet familiar with, and their desire is to offer a representative image of the emigration as a movement by describing the personal immigrant experience. However, the intention is by no means to consider migration literature as an objective description of emigration, but rather to reveal that it provides perspectives "from the objective reality of the emigration movement and it

expresses subjective understandings of the emigration process."[9] (Kongslien, 1989, 47).

An episode related by Edvard Hoem in 2018 is illustrative for the impact migration has upon us:

> Emigration is an international and a timeless phenomenon. I remember the first time I had a lecture about *Haymaker in Heaven*. There were two Italians there who lived in Norway because they married Norwegian women. They were musicians, both of them, and they said: this is not a local or a Norwegian problem, we also have mothers who sit in Sicily and miss us and it is a little easier to visit the mothers now, but it is the same, that families are being broken up, people are being separated and this is much more encountered today. **All those who come here for better or worse have parents somewhere or very many of them are part of the course of history and emigration is part of the course of history**.[10] (Hoem, 2018).

Migration is a phenomenon that more people than ever experience today, generating questions of identity and belonging, now, as it did hundreds of years ago. The families are separated, parents long for their children, children are not there for their parents when they need help as they grow old, missing important events in the life of their family. Migration literature depicts these inner struggles, the conflicts arising from the duality of the immigrant life, providing, if not healing, at least a better understanding of this gripping phenomenon.

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[9] Own translation from Norwegian: "både bilete frå den objektive røyndomen emigrasjonsrørsla var og uttrykkjer subjektive forståingar av emigrasjonsprosessen." (Kongslien, 1989, 44).

[10] Own translation from Norwegian: "Utvandringen, det er en internasjonalt og et tidløst fenomen, da, så jeg husker første gang jeg hadde foredrag om *Slåttekar i himmelen*. Det var to italienere der, de bor i Norge pga. norske kvinner da, musikere begge to, og de sa: dette er ikke et lokalt eller norsk problem, vi har også mødre som sitter på Sicilia og savner oss og det er jo litt lettere å besøke mødrene nå, men det er det samme, at familiene blir brutt opp, at folk blir skilt fra hverandre, det er jo enda mye mer i dag. Alle de som kommer hit på godt og på vondt, de har jo foreldre et eller annet sted, eller veldig mange det hører med til historiens gang og utvandringen er en del av historiens gang." (Hoem, 2018).

CHAPTER 2
CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN NORWEGIAN AND ROMANIAN IMMIGRATION IN NORTH AMERICA
UNTIL THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This chapter provides insights into the mass migration of the Norwegians and Romanians to America with the aim of finding correspondences between the emigration from the two countries. Structured as a chronological overview of the phenomenon, the chapter consists of three distinct subchapters, each with two parts dedicated to the case of Norwegians and to that of Romanians, discussing the history of the emigration, the building of the two immigrant communities, the letters written by the immigrants in America to their family and friends in the homeland, as well as the role played by these letters in the way the emigration unfolded.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NORWEGIAN AND ROMANIAN MIGRATION TO AMERICA

This subchapter presents the two emigrations and their evolution by referring to the European context within which the emigrant exodus took place, by focusing on the first immigrants and settlements, on the causes of the emigration, on how it evolved, on the voyage across the ocean, on the attitude towards the phenomenon. It also provides portraits of the pioneer figures and the most prominent Norwegian and Romanian immigrants, describing the typical immigrants, as well as those who returned in the homeland.

The wider context of mass migration from Europe needs to be tackled before bringing forth the emigration of the two peoples that are the object of this research. It will be easier to understand the Norwegians' and Romanians'

decision to emigrate to the New World after a brief insight into the larger emigration from Europe.

The Norwegian emigration started soon after the mass migration of the Irish and the Germans, so it belonged to the "old immigration" to America, as many called it. Their Nordic background allowed them to blend rather easily in the American multicultural environment, despite the difficulties they first experienced when not knowing the English language. The Romanian emigration is considered as part of the "new immigration", since the Romanians, together with other south-east Europeans migrated in swelling numbers when the old immigration was coming to an end. As Olaf Norlie noticed, the best land had been taken, the western and northern countries of Europe were industrialized, and the wages were close to those in America when the people from Southern and Eastern Europe, with much lower living standards, were coming to the New World because of the oppression and the poverty they were experiencing at home. They were coming to a changed America, when an industrial expansion was on the rise, when there was a huge need for cheap unskilled labour (Norlie, 1925, 90). By the time the news travelled eastwards and the Romanians had learned about the endless possibilities in America, the northern immigrants had already put down roots in the New World.

The European Migration to America

The first to settle in North America after its discovery were the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, but only a few hundred troops with their families, and missionaries headed for the New World. The English and French followed, but succeeded only at the beginning of the seventeenth century to establish colonies. Afterwards, the Dutch and the Swedes also established colonies in New York and Delaware, while thousands of British puritans arrived between 1629 and 1640, founding a large colony in Massachussetts Bay, which also absorbed Plymouth colony and stretched to Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Connecticut. There were also some colonies founded by Catholics in Maryland, by Quakers in Pennsylvania and others in the Carolinas. As there was a growing demand for workforce, Klein observes that the selling of one's labour to shippers who also sold their indentured contracts to English or French employers in America became the most important form of colonization during the first fifty years of northern European settlement in the New World (Klein, 2004, 46). Hence, estimates reveal that more than

half of the 307,000 European migrants to America arriving between 1700 and 1775 were indentured labourers, while a quarter of a million African slaves were brought during the same period to sustain the colonies (Klein, 2004, 47-48). Yet, the practice of bringing indentured workers to the colonies continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century, while the tendency shifted towards individual immigration, as more and more people were immigrating as free immigrants.

The beginning of the eighteenth century marked the emigration of the Palatinates (Germans from the County Palatinate of the Rhine) and the Scotch-Irish, who emigrated to America in large numbers. The Germans had been reduced to extreme poverty by wars, while their Protestant faith was put at risk by their ruler who wanted to convert them back to Catholicism, so they chose to flee to America, most of the times via Great Britain (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 34). On the other hand, the Scotch-Irish had moved to Ulster from Scotland because of religious reasons, and found themselves bound to leave for America in the first half of the eighteenth century. Henry Pratt Fairchild writes that 150,000 Scotch-Irish fled to America before the Revolution, representing the largest contributing group to the American immigration in the eighteenth century, settling mostly in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine, and Pennsylvania (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 37-38). However, the number of immigrants remains relatively small until 1820, the transportation conditions were still very poor, with a high mortality rate for the Atlantic crossings. Yet, the year 1819 registered the first document to regulate immigration, which was actually an act that regarded the transportation conditions, a limitation of the number of passengers depending on the weight of the ship, namely the U.S. Passenger Lists (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 62; Cohn, 2009, 19). At the same time, as Pratt Fairchild observes, this act allowed for the first statistics on immigration to be collected (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 62).

Ferenczi and Willcox analyse the statistics for the period between 1821 and 1924, which reveal that about 40 million people immigrated to America, of whom 31 million to the United States, with the largest immigration in the first half of the century coming from Great Britain and Germany, whereas that from France, Scandinavia and Switzerland was a less significant part to the total number, although large in comparison to their population (Ferenczi, Willcox, 1929, 82, 236-237). Furthermore, Klein refers to the migration stages: in its early stage, from the 1830s until the 1880s, the large majority

of the migrants came from Northwestern Europe, while between the 1880s and the 1920s, the migrants were coming from Eastern and Southern Europe (Klein, 2004, 95-96). The size of the emigration grew constantly, and data reveal that for the period 1831-1835 the average flow of immigrants in the United States was below 50 000 people, for the period 1846–1850, of about 250,000 persons per year, reaching 500,000 persons in the 1880s, while the first years of the twentieth century, 1901-1905, registered almost a million people arriving to the United States each year (Klein, 2004, 96). Of course, the numbers of migrants fluctuated, particularly because of the Civil War, when a decline was registered, but also because of the First World War, which represents another important milestone in the evolution of mass migration to America.

At the root of this explosion in the number of immigrants lies, on the one hand, the exhilarating development of the United States, in stark contrast with the poor economic conditions in Europe, especially if we consider the potato famine in Ireland (1846-1847), which generated a mass exodus of the Irish that had reached salvation and received help to emigrate from benevolent agencies in Ireland or Britain (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 74). At the same time, the discovery of gold in California at the middle of the nineteenth century, the abolition of serfdom in many provinces of the Habsburg and the Russian Empires and other factors contributed to the explosive increase in the number of those who emigrated to the United States of America. The Germans were becoming at that time almost as numerous as the Irish, but attracted less attention. The peak year for the Irish immigration was 1851, with 272 240 Irish entering the United States, whereas the number of Germans who immigrated reached 215 009 in 1854; the same year, 1854, 87.8% of the immigrants were Irish and German, and 1873 they represented 68.8% of the immigrants (Pratt Fairchild, 1918, 92-93). Moreover, the revolutions in 1848 caused stirs throughout Europe, and many of the leaders and adepts of the movements were forced to flee across the Atlantic Ocean.

Other developments that influenced the phenomenon was the transition from the sailing vessels to steamships, which would become the main transportation method after 1865. Around that period, the immigration from Scandinavia began to grow stronger, showing that the Norwegians, Swedes and Danes were also enticed by the promise of land in America. Of the Scandinavians, the Norwegians were the most numerous if we consider the population, as about 800 000 Norwegians left the homeland for America

between 1865 and 1915, while Norway had 1 800 000 inhabitants in 1865 and 2 500 000 in 1915, being the second European country affected by the emigration, in the era of the "old immigration", with Ireland occupying the first place (Semmingsen, 1978, 99). Besides the promise of land, the poor survival prospects in the homeland, the increase in the population, industrialization, etc., all contributed to the mass exodus of the Norwegians to America.

As previously mentioned, the second half of the nineteenth century, especially the 1880s, witnessed an important change in the origin of the immigrants. The new immigrants, as they were called, were now streaming from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the 1870s, the immigrants from Austria-Hungary, Italy or Russia represented only 6% of the total number of immigrants entering the United States ports, in the 1880s they reached 18%, whereas the South and East Europeans surpassed the North Europeans in the 1890s, when they were more than half of all the immigrants; by 1900s, they represented two-thirds of the migrants (Klein, 2004, 128-129). Besides the change in the origin of the immigrants, there was another important change in what concerns their new residence, since most of them settled in urban areas, in contrast with the immigrants from Northern Europe, who had preferred to settle in rural areas. Of these, the Romanians were mostly coming from Transylvania, under Austro-Hungarian rule until 1918, and not from the Old Kingdom of Romania, formed in 1859, that gained independence in 1881. If the idea of earning a thousand dollars and return to the homeland tempted many to cross Europe and embark for America, the freedom to speak their mother tongue and rejoice in their Romanian identity, which they found in the New World, was one of the factors that determined them to remain. Mainly poverty, the unequal distribution of property and lack of land for most of the Transylvanian population constituted the "push" factor for those who emigrated (Bolovan, 1999, 140-154).

Besides the mass migration from Europe, the United States experienced a powerful inner migration, directed particularly westwards. This expansion, however, severely reduced the native American population, which declined from nearly two million in 1500 to about half a million in 1900. Moreover, the inner migration had another dimension, namely the migration from rural to urban areas in the late nineteenth century, registering an increase of 30%, as the urban population in the1850s represented 15% and reached 46% in

1910 (Klein, 2004, 139-142). It is easy to observe how the American immigration began to change profoundly.

Hence, both national and international events influenced the evolution of the mass migration. The First World War blocked the access of Europeans to America, generating an important decline in the volume of the immigration. Moreover, despite an increase following the first global conflagration, the Immigration Quota Law of 1921 further influenced the phenomenon, as it set limits of immigrants on each country, imposing serious restrictions on the immigration. The Great Depression also played an important role, as the United States was becoming less attractive for immigrants because of the crisis on the labour market (Klein, 2004, 164). Last, but not least, the Second World War halted this global movement that has had such tremendous effects both on the individuals, either from Europe or America, shaping their future and still influencing their present.

All in all, the United States was at the height of its development when the floods of immigrants were streaming from Europe. As Ferenczi and Willcox observe, the newcomers could find there a tremendous amount of land, liberal agrarian legislation, and an industry which offered more and better possibilities of employment (Ferenczi, Willcox, 1929, 84). America has drawn in people like a magnet, and still does, despite the improved living standards all over the world.

The analysis of the two migrations begins with an account of the first recorded immigrants, then focuses on the evolution of the migration, namely on the building of the first settlements and immigrant communities and on how they influenced the migration, with reference to the most significant waves of migration, but also to the returning immigrants. Furthermore, the causes of the emigration are also analysed for a comprehensive perspective upon this phenomenon with huge implications both for the immigrants themselves and for the homeland, as well as for the adoptive country. The focus then shifts to the immigrant communities, to the institutions and organisations they built in the New World, as well as to the main elements their immigrant communities consisted of: church, school and press.

NORWEGIAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

The Norwegian emigration to America has been of such ampleness that it had a huge impact on the homeland, on the friends and relatives of those that have chosen to try their luck miles away from the safe shores that were so familiar to them, but that could not provide them the life they wanted. Thus, people from every fjord, every valley, every village had relatives that had emigrated starting with the year 1825, when the first significant group of Norwegians embarked for the New World. Such an impact could not be overlooked by historians on either side of the Atlantic Ocean, starting with the Norwegian-Americans: Rasmus B. Anderson, who contributed to the homemaking myth of the Vikings who had discovered America before Columbus, George T. Flom, Olaf Norlie, Theodore C. Blegen, the first to acknowledge the importance of America letters, Odd Lovoll, but also in the homeland, Ingrid Semmingsen, and Orm Øverland, who collected thousands of America letters and published them in both Norwegian and English editions. It is also useful for this research to analyse both perspectives in order to better grasp the effects of the emigration on both the emigrants and on those that did not emigrate.

Nils Olav Østrem considers that the Norwegian emigration to USA has greatly influenced the the development of the Norwegian society, as the emigration was first of all an important social process, a durable phenomenon with no little impact upon the society, both in our times and throughout history (Østrem, 2006, 17-18). Hence, the first thing that could be perceived by both emigrants and the remaining relatives was the separation from the family, which thousands and thousands of Norwegian families experienced. Moreover, the evolution of these family ties, most of the times supported by the letters sent to and from the homeland, also had an impact, particularly for the family that remained in Norway, as they many times received financial support from the emigrated relatives. But the connections run deeper, and still exist today, on both sides of the ocean.

Norway had a population of about 883 400 people in the first census from 1801, of which the upper class – clearly distinct from the common people – consisted of officials, important merchants, or wealthy landowners, and represented barely 2% of the inhabitants, while the middle class was made up of farmers or craftsmen, and the lower class of day labourers, servants, and a great deal of paupers (Lovoll, 1999, 8-9). It was a rural society, as 91%

of the Norwegian population lived at the time in the countryside, earning their existence as farmers, fishermen, cotters, whereas the cities, such as Bergen, or Christiania (Oslo) were small, home to the numerous country officials; all this shows that Norway was an underdeveloped country at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Lovoll, 1999, 9). However, after 1814, when Norway secured its independence from Denmark and adopted its first constitution, the country changed dramatically in a rather short period of time, experiencing economic growth, urban development, industrialisation, and the traditional rural society was slowly weakened by all these transformations (Lovoll, 1999, 10).

The first Norwegians emigrated to America in the seventeenth century, and few others in the 1700s. But the economic growth, as well as the developing national feelings in Norway (which was not an independent state at the time, being under Danish rule since 1537), created premises for better lives for the Norwegians. They learned more and more about the rising American states, that gained independence from Great Britain, and felt sympathy for this new country that had succeeded to become free and independent (Semmingsen, 1978, 8). Semmingsen also observes that the Norwegian emigration to America began earlier than in the other Nordic countries, highlighting Norway's geographical location and its position as a seafaring nation as important factors (Semmingsen, 1978, 53). Thus, Norway's location in the North-West of Europe, its access to the Norwegian Sea and Atlantic Ocean, the Norwegians' previous migrations to various Dutch ports, and perhaps their adventurous spirit inherited from the Vikings, all contributed to the early success of emigration to America.

Together with Knud Olsen Eide, Cleng Peerson, a carpenter, sailed to America as agent for a group of Norwegians from Stavanger who were thinking about migrating to America in search of religious freedom and better prospects. Their mission was to learn as much as possible about the country, and to assist the Quakers from Stavanger in starting a new life in America. The two men travelled and worked in different places, all the time looking for appropriate places for founding a colony. Eide fell ill, unfortunately, and died, but Peerson managed to return to Norway in 1924. The Stavanger Quakers received a report from Cleng Peerson, who, it seems, persuaded them that it was indeed worth to found a Norwegian settlement in this new country. Considering Ingrid Semmingsen's opinion on Peerson, "Cleng the storyteller, a man adept at embroidering his narrative with details

perhaps less truthful than grand" (Semmingsen, 1978, 17), it was very likely for him to have been able to easily persuade the Quakers to go to America. The following year, Cleng Peerson sailed back to the United States of America, where he would wait for the Stavanger sloopers on their arrival in New York on the 9th of October 1925.

Restauration

In 1825, on the 4th of July, fifty-two Norwegians embarked on *Restauration* ("The Restoration"), a small sailing boat (sloop) which would take them from Stavanger, a harbour in the South-West of Norway, to the shores of the New World. The ship had been built in Hardanger in 1801, and had been previously used to transport fish and grains between Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Later, in 1820, it had been rebuilt and enlarged, but it weighed though only one quarter of the weight of *Mayflower* (Semmingsen, 1978, 10), the vessel which had taken the Puritans from Plymouth to America in 1620. The sloopers – as its travellers were called – were led by Lars Larsen Geilane from Stavanger; the other emigrants, who could not have been poor if we consider the costs of such a long journey, came from Rogaland, mainly from Tysvær, and most of them were married couples with children, while the rest were young men, except one unmarried woman, the sister of the expedition leader (Semmingsen, 1978, 11). The party got larger on their way to the New World, as a girl was born on board and was given the name Margaret Allen, which showed their attachment to the Quaker values and community and, perhaps, the sloopers' desire to be easily integrated in the American society.

After crossing the North Sea, the *Restauration* passed through the English Channel, and stopped in Lisett, a small port on the coast of England, where they sold liquor to the locals. When they found out it was illegal to sell liquor there, the sloopers left in a hurry. It cannot be said if this was their intention, but their second stop was in Funchal, after having found a barrel of Madeira wine floating on the sea, which they tasted. They arrived thus in the Portuguese port "without colours and without command" (Anderson, 1896, 58), like a pest ship, as they were too drunk to show their flag. However, they luckily avoided being attacked with cannons after they raised the flag, and they remained in Funchal for nearly a week to equip themselves with provisions, but also to visit the Norwegian-Swedish consul, who stamped their ship's papers (Semmingsen, 1978, 15). The sloopers arrived in New York in October, after a three-and-a-half-month voyage, Cleng Peerson was

waiting for them, and Rasmus B. Anderson writes about the sensation they had awakened among New Yorkers, as they had embarked on a perilous journey across the Atlantic in such a small vessel (Anderson, 1896, 60).

The beginning of their new life in America was not easy, however hopeful they may have been. Upon their arrival in New York, the Norwegian emigrants that had sailed the Atlantic on *Restauration* learned that they had violated an American federal act issued in 1819 which regulated the number of passengers that were allowed on board of a vessel depending on its tonnage (Semmingsen, 1978, 15). The fines were consistent, of about $3,000, and the newcomers had no possibility to pay such a large amount of money; yet, their case benefitted from the support of the Quakers, who wrote on their behalf a petition to President John Quincy Adams. The petition was accepted and the sloopers were given a waiver of the fine, and their ship was released. After that, they sold the ship for only $400, far less than they had expected. Building a life in America with few resources was no easy task for the first Norwegian immigrants. Luckily, the Quakers continued to show them compassion, and gave them shelter and money for food and clothing, but also helped them move to Kendall Township, in the North of the New York State, where the pioneer Cleng Peerson had found some land suitable for farming.

The First Norwegian Settlements

Making America home was not as easy as the sloopers had expected. In order to cultivate crops, they had to first start clearing the wooded land. They arrived in Kendall, near Lake Ontario, only in November, and the winter was approaching as they found themselves with few to live on. For a time, they had to settle for as little as possible. Rasmus B. Anderson mentions how, because of the difficulties the settlers were facing, "they longed to get back to old Norway, but like Xerxes of old they had burnt the bridges behind them, and a return would not be only humiliating but almost impossible." (Anderson, 1896, 77) One of the passengers on *Restauration*, Henrik Hervig (Henry Harwick), described in a letter to the editor of *Fædrelandet og Emigranten* dated 9 February, 1871, the difficulties of early pioneer life in Kendall: "After a long voyage we finally arrived safe in New York and went thence to this place in the forest. We were all poor, and none of us could speak English. When we arrived in Kendall the most of us became sick and discouraged." (Anderson, 1896, 79-80). And this immigrant confesses also how their perception of life in America relied mainly on the differences

between the two countries, and how these perceptions started to change with time: “I must confess that when we first arrived here we thought everything was wrong, when it was not like what there was in Norway. But we soon found that there were good things even among people who worshiped God in another manner than we did” (Anderson, 1896, 80). With the help of Joseph Fellows, a Quaker friend of Cleng Peerson who agreed to receive the payment through ten annual instalments, the first settlers managed to buy themselves land, which they later deforested to build their homes, and to cultivate it.

However, after the first few harsh years, better times came for the Norwegian settlers as they started to earn more and gain financial independence. Some of them decided to remain in Kendall, or returned to their first settlement after having tried their luck in other parts, and some of them moved to Michigan, Wisconsin, or Illinois. The leader of the sloopers, Lars Larsen Geilane, is another important figure for the beginning of the migration from Norway to the United States. He was the one who remained in New York City to arrange the sale of the sloop and of the cargo the group had brought from Norway. As winter had come in the meantime, he did not reach the Kendall Settlement until spring, and stayed in Rochester, East of Kendall, where he later took his entire family (Anderson, 1896, 64-65). Larsen was a carpenter, and he became a successful boat builder in America, both due to his skills, and to his knowledge of English, which he had acquired while trying to find work as a carpenter in London, years before the long voyage to the New World. George T. Flom mentions in his history of Norwegian immigration that Larsen kept in close touch with the Norwegian immigrants, and that “his home became a sort of Mecca for hosts of intending settlers in the New World” (Flom, 1909, 53). Thousands of Norwegians who were on their way to Illinois or Wisconsin stayed in his house between 1836 and 1845 (Anderson, 1896, 65), when he died in an accident on the canal.

The first Norwegian settlement in America was home, though not for a very long period of time, to Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland, apparently the first migrant from the Hardanger region in Norway, a farmer who left the homeland in 1831, via Gothenburg, and New York (Anderson, 1896, 81). Hovland also influenced the Norwegian emigration as he became a very prolific letter writer (Semmingsen, 1978, 17), and his letters, in which he spoke to his fellow Norwegians of the equality and liberty he had found in the West, “were transcribed in hundreds of copies and passed from house to

house, and from parish to parish, and many were in this way induced to think of America and emigration" (Anderson, 1896, 82).

Although we cannot witness a significant rise in the Norwegian immigration to the United States immediately after the first settlers arrived on board of *Restauration* in 1825, the Kendall settlement was temporary home to most newcomers from Norway. With the opening of the Erie Canal, the westward migration began. Once again, the pioneer Cleng Peerson played a significant role, leading his people like Moses, as historian Ingrid Semmingsen mentions (Semmingsen, 1978, 17), this time not to Kendall, but to Fox River valley, in Illinois. In 1833, he continued his wanderings in search of new land for his fellow Norwegians, travelled to Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, then to Chicago, in Illinois, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin (Flom, 1909, 53), and came across the valley of this river in Illinois, seeing its potential. Upon his return to Kendall, he spoke of the beauties of this land in the West, and, within a couple of years, most of the immigrants moved to La Salle County, Illinois, after having succeeded to make a profit by selling their homes in Kendall. Those who remained in Kendall did their best to fit in the American immigrant nation, as Anna Danielson, the daughter of Rasmus Danielson, a Norwegian born not too far from Stavanger, who emigrated to America in 1858, wrote in a response letter to Rasmus Anderson. In her letter dated 28th of February, 1895, in Kendall, NY, published by Rasmus B. Anderson, she gives an account of the life of Norwegian-Americans in Kendall, mentioning that "the few families remaining here have made up their minds to be Americans. They do not wish to forget their old homes across the sea, but they try to do as the Americans do" (Anderson, 1896, 89).

The second Norwegian settlement in America was the Fox River Settlement, in La Salle County, Illinois, where Cleng Peerson, accompanied by other men from Kendall, found better lands than in Kendall, and better prospects for those interested in going westwards. Its significance is primary not due to its early appearance, but due to the fact that, within a short period of time, it changed the direction of the Norwegian settlement to the West, to the areas West of Lake Michigan (Qualey, 1934, 134). The prices of land were much lower here, giving the settlers the opportunity to possess larger areas, so, in 1835, the Norwegians started to buy land in the western settlement. From thirty people in 1834-1835, the Fox River Settlement grew larger and larger, expanding to the neighbouring counties of Kendall, Grundy and DeKalb (Anderson, 1896, 60). Cleng Peerson bought land there (although without

the intention to settle, as the future showed), Gjert Hovland as well, 160 acres, and many others, while the first settlement, Kendall, started to lose its importance for the migration process. The apparition of this settlement anticipated the enormous migration to the West of the American continent. Carlton C. Qualey mentions how "the migration of the pioneer Norwegians to Illinois in 1834 was a part of the greater migration of thousands of families, both native American and foreign-born, westward to Illinois and beyond" (Qualey, 1934, 133).

Cleng Peerson, the Father of Norwegian Migration to America

There is one important figure in the beginnings of the Norwegian migration to America, and that figure is Cleng (Kleng) Peerson, often called the "pathfinder", or the "father of Norwegian immigration", even the "Peer Gynt of the prairies". Due to his restless spirit, to his adventurous life, and, of course, to the role played in the migration of Norwegians to America, Peerson became a mythical figure (Semmingsen, 1978, 20), almost legendary (Flom, 1909, 48). Kleng Pedersen Hesthammer was his birth name, which he later Americanized, and he was born in Tysvær, Rogaland, in 1783, on the 17th of May, on the same day when the first Norwegian constitution was adopted later, in 1814. Restlessness and the desire to travel seem to have always accompanied him. In his youth, he is said to have travelled to France, England, and Germany. A rebel spirit, he dissented from the Norwegian state church, and was accused to have encouraged people in a parish in Finnøy, where he was living at some time, not to attend the church mass. The Quaker philosophy might have appealed to him more than that of the Norwegian state church; this could explain his closeness to the Quakers, although records do not show he ever belonged to this group of religious dissenters.

Cleng Peerson's figure is extremely relevant for the history of the first Norwegian settlements. Although we do not know if the expedition of the Restauration party was his idea, the information he gathered in America was crucial in their decision to emigrate. Sarah A. Peterson, one of Peerson's nieces, writes in a letter she wrote in 1895 to prof. Rasmus Anderson how her uncle's reports from America managed to convince the sloopers to emigrate: "He came back with such glowing descriptions that all got the emigration fever and moved west." (Anderson, 1896, 182). More than that, the sloopers first settled in Kendall, near Lake Ontario, the place chosen by Person to start their new lives, which he envisioned as a large colony where all Norwegians

would settle and share everything in common (Semmingsen, 1978, 21). Eventually, he would take many of them to the Midwest, La Salle county, in the Fox River valley, in Illinois, a settlement that became an important migration centre for the large numbers of Norwegians that would choose to settle into the Midwest, shifting the course of the migration to the West. "The Kendall and Fox River settlements are his undying glory" (Anderson, 1896, 180) wrote prof. Rasmus B. Anderson in his study on the first chapter of the Norwegian immigration to America, but he could not settle himself, due to his restlessness. He purchased land in La Salle, but without the intention to use it himself, but rather help his relatives and friends have an easy start on American shores. His niece provides further details about how Peerson dedicated himself to helping others: "uncle believed in dividing the land among the newcomers and the poor. He never reserved an acre for himself. He was the most unselfish person I ever saw. He was always busy finding land for the immigrants, and used all his means for the comfort of others." (Anderson, 1896, 183). Despite being "a man of strict integrity" (Anderson, 1896, 180), Cleng Peerson was less interested in working, and preferred to be the visitor with many interesting stories, which his friends and relatives welcomed heartily, as Anderson related (Anderson, 1896, 180-181).

Cleng Peerson's wanderlust took him to Missouri, where he founded a new settlement in Shelby county, in 1837. This settlement was less to the liking of his fellow Norwegians, whom he had brought from the visit he made in Norway in 1838-1839, and many of them chose to settle in Lee county, Iowa, where they founded a new settlement, Sugar Creek. He made another journey to Norway, in 1842-1843, and he moved to Illinois in 1847, in a Swedish settlement, Bishop Hill. Although there is not much known about his personal life, he seems to have been married to a rich Norwegian widow whom he had left when he first embarked for America. In Bishop Hill, Cleng Peerson married for a second time, to a Swedish woman, but this marriage was unfortunate too, as he left the second wife and the settlement after a couple of years. He eventually put down roots in Texas, after three years spent in Dallas county, from 1850, moving to Bosque county, this time following a group of Norwegian settlers. He died there in 1865, at the age of 82, after having laid the foundation of no less than four Norwegian settlements in the United States of America, of which the Fox River settlement in La Salle county, Illinois, would became the access gate of Norwegians to the Midwest. Cleng Peerson's contribution to the mass

Norwegian migration in America is essential, opening new perspectives for those in search of better prospects and new opportunities.

Other Pioneer Figures in Norwegian Migration

Johannes (Johan) Nordboe

Johannes Nordboe was among the oldest Norwegian migrants in America. Though at the age of sixty-four, he had the courage to embark for the unknown together with his wife and four children. He was definitely no ordinary farmer, judging by the letters he has written, in which he described the conditions in America. Coming from Ringebu in Gudbrandsdal, Nordboe had moved several times in Norway before emigrating to America in 1832. In the homeland, he was known to be a painter, an artist, but he also possessed knowledge of old folk medicine (Semmingsen, 1978, 25), and Anderson mentions that Nordboe had vaccinated children in Kendall and in the Fox River settlement (Anderson, 1896, 139). He moved further to the West, and later became the first Norwegian settler in Texas, although his intention had most likely been to avoid his fellow countrymen (Anderson, 1896, 139). He chose to settle in Dallas county, but interacted with the Reiersons and Wærensjolds who had settled in the Four Mile Prairie settlement, where he spent the Christmas holidays of 1851 with Cleng Peerson (Anderson, 1896, 140). The letters Nordboe sent home express his discontent towards the situation in Norway, which had forced him to emigrate, and show how much he appreciated the economic and religious freedom he had found in America (Semmingsen, 1978, 24). Thus, the New World offered him the opportunity to lead an existence with fewer restraints.

Gjert Hovland

Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland, a farmer from Hardanger in Bergens Stift, also influenced the Norwegian migration to America through his letters, which were copied, and passed on from village to village, from parish to parish, from family to family. He emigrated to America in 1831, via Gothenburg, and settled in Kendall. Knud Langeland related in his Norwegian immigration history to America (*Nordmændene i Amerika. Nogle Optegnelser om De Norskes Udvandring til Amerika*) that he owned a copy of a Hovland letter written in 1835, in Morris County, where Hovland had been living for four years (Langeland, 1889, 16). The letter tells about how Hovland first settled

in Kendall, and bought 50 acres of land, which he sold after 4 years at a profit of 500 dollars. In 1836, he settled in La Salle county, in Illinois, where he remained until his death in 1870. His letter is full of praise for the American laws, equality, and freedom, in stark contrast with the exploitation of the poor by the aristocracy in Norway (Langeland, 1889, 17). Hovland encouraged his fellow Norwegians to emigrate to America, and the letters he wrote circulated "far and widely, in hundreds of copies, arousing great interest among the people" (Langeland, 1889, 17). "We have gained more since our arrival here than I did during all the time I lived in Norway, and I have every prospect of earning a living here for myself and my family – even if my family becomes larger – so long as God gives me good health." (Ellison, 1922, 71) wrote Hovland to his brother-in-law in a letter from 1835. His admiration for his new country could be synthetized in a phrase from the same letter: "I do not believe there can be better laws and arrangements for the benefit and happiness of the common man in the whole world." (Ellison, 1922, 71). Besides praising America, Hovland gave detailed accounts about the pioneer life, so that the Norwegian farmers would know what to expect. Most likely some of the immigrants might have felt disappointment upon their arrival, and did not find everything as easy as they had imagined, but, as the historian Theodore C. Blegen put it, "Hovland reflected the optimism of the American frontier, where land and liberty, which he vaunted, were undeniable realities, though the trials, both material and spiritual, which he did not appraise, were also real" (Blegen, 1931, 70). However, thanks to his early migration, and to the numerous letters in which he advocated for the emigration, Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland is considered one of the chief promoters of the Norwegian migration to the New World (Anderson, 1896, 82).

The Nattestad brothers

Ole and Ansten Nattestad, two brothers from Numedal, decided to embark for America in 1837, after having first heard in Stavanger about the opportunities this unknown country offered. Ole had tried to make a living as farmer, but soon realized that all the hard work did not pay off, so he decided to trade sheep, which he bought from Stavanger in order to sell in their home county. He had read some immigrant letters, had heard of better prospects across the ocean, and persuaded his brother Ansten to consider emigration. Ingrid Semmingsen called the two brothers "wanderers in their homeland" (Semmingsen, 1978, 26), as they had fought against the harsh

living conditions in Norway, and had tried their luck in different ways, but the America letters, combined with their sense for adventure, convinced them to emigrate. Together with another countryman, the Nattestad brothers started their journey from Numedal, heading to Stavanger on skis to embark for Gothenburg, and from there to America. Their story has been recorded in 1869 by Svein Nilsson for *Billed-magazin*, the first illustrated monthly periodical published in Norwegian in the United States, and later translated to English by Rasmus B. Anderson. Ole Nattestad related how their journey started: "Our equipment consisted of the clothes we wore, a pair of skis, and a knapsack. People looked at us with wonder and intimated that we must have lost our senses. They suggested that we had better hang ourselves in the first tree in order to avoid a worse fate." (Anderson, Nattestad, 1917, 162). Furthermore, he speaks of the difficulties the immigrants must face, of the homesickness that grips them, before being able to find their place in the new home: "I have heard many, especially among the women, say that if they have ever so good days, they are homesick for Norway. Everyone that starts on the journey must consider that one must first taste sour before he can drink sweet. It is difficult here when one does not understand the language and it is worse when he is unable to work." (Anderson, Nattestad, 1917, 186). The Nattestad brothers joined a larger party that had come to America from Bergen, and were led by Ole Rynning, son of a minister who had studied at the University of Christiania (Oslo). After an unsuccessful attempt of the group to settle in Beaver Creek, Illinois, which proved to be a marshy land, and devastated by malaria, most of them perished. Soon after that, in the spring of 1838, Ansten Nattestad returned to Norway, and carried with him America letters, but also the manuscript of a journal written by his brother Ole, *Beskrivelse over en Reise til Nordamerica, begyndt den 8de April 1837 og skrevet paa Skibet Hilda samt siden fortsat paa Reisen op igjennem de Forenede Stater i* Nordamerica (translated into English by Rasmus B. *Anderson as Description of a Journey to North America*, published in 1917 in Madison), that was published in Drammen the next year, and Ole Rynning's *Sandfærdig Beretning om Amerika til Oplysning og Nytte for Bonde og Menigmand* (*Ole Rynning's True Account of America for the Information and Help of Peasant and Commoner,* translated by Theodore C. Blegen, and published in Minneapolis, in 1926), which was published a year earlier, already in 1838, and that proved to be a better-written and more valuable account.

Meanwhile, Ole Knudsen Nattestad moved to Wisconsin, where he founded the first Norwegian settlement, in the southeast of Rock County, the Jefferson Prairie settlement (Anderson, Nattestad, 1917, 160, 164). Ole recollected the beginning of is new life in Wisconsin in the interview given to Nilsson: “So far as known, no other Norwegian had planted his feet on Wisconsin soil before me. For a whole year I saw no countryman but lived alone without friend, family, or companion. Eight Americans had settled in the town before me but they lived about as isolated as I did.” (Anderson, Nattestad, 1917, 164). Although he lived in such isolation, he saw the potential of the land, and, despite the difficulties, Nattestad remained in Clinton, Rock County: “I found the soil very fertile and the monotony of the prairie was relieved by, small bunches of trees. Deer and other game were abundant. The horrid howl of the prairie wolf disturbed my sleep until habit armed my ears against annoyances of this sort.” (Anderson, Nattestad, 1917, 164-165). Ole built a small log house, and, in the summer of 1839, received a large group of Norwegian immigrants who had joined his brother Ansten in Drammen, being convinced to emigrate to America by the two published accounts about the emigration. The population of the settlement grew rapidly, and Wisconsin soon became the main destination for most Norwegian immigrants in America (Blegen, 1931, 114). Ole and Ansten Nattestad have thus gained an important place among the pioneers of Norwegian migration to the United States of America.

Ole Rynning

The year 1837 played an important role in the evolution of the Norwegian emigration to America; it was the year in which Ole Rynning, a young man “whose influence on the early Norwegian emigration was as great as that of Cleng Peerson and possibly greater” (Blegen, 1931, 81), chose to leave the homeland for the New World. Although his story is rather sad, since he died within a year after migrating to America, Rynning wrote a little book about his emigration experience, and this book had a great impact on the emigration from Norway to America, as it provided first-hand information about this new land.

As previously mentioned, the Nattestad brothers joined a group of Norwegians who had left Bergen on board of Ægir, the first emigrant ship that sailed from Bergen. The ship’s captain was Christian K. Behrens, and it had 84 passengers, with Ole Rynning among them. He was born on the

4th of April 1809, in Ringsaker, as the son of the reverend Jens Rynning. The family moved in 1825 to Snaasen, in Trondhjem Stift, where Ole's father was appointed minister of the parish (Blegen, 1931, 89; Anderson, 1896, 203). Rasmus B. Anderson mentioned in his volume about the history of the Norwegian migration to America an account given by reverend Bernt J. Muus, Ole Rynning's nephew, from which we learn that Ole had studied at the university for four years, and afterwards kept a private school for advanced scholars before he emigrated to America, despite his family's wish that he should study theology (Anderson, 1896, 203-204). His intention was, rev. Muus related, to buy a marsh from his uncle, which he wanted to cultivate, but was unable to raise the necessary money. Hence, he decided to emigrate to America.

Rynning realized how important it was to share his American experience. In the preface of his book, he provides arguments for the need of truthful information about the emigration: "I felt on that occasion how unpleasant it is for those who wish to emigrate to *America* to be without a trustworthy and fairly detailed account of the country." (Rynning, 1926, 63). Moreover, his experience had shown him how ignorant people were when it came to America, "and what false and preposterous reports were believed as full truth." (Rynning, 1926, 63). Thus, he structured his little book in 13 chapters, which offer details about the geographical position of America, about the distance from Norway, how the country became known and so popular among migrants, about the type and cost of land, and the places where Norwegians had settled in America, about wages and living costs. Other details refer to the language spoken there, to the religion of the Americans, to what kind of people are advisable to emigrate, but also to potential dangers the emigrants might encounter on their way and in the New World. The last chapter provides practical advice regarding the necessary preparations for the voyage. Ansten Nattestad mentioned in the interview given to Svein Nilsson that Reverend Kragh from Eidsvold deliberately left out from publishing a chapter in which Rynning criticized the Norwegian clergymen, accusing them of intolerance, and lack of involvement in promoting education for the poor, for their own betterment (Anderson, 1896, 207).

Ole Rynning, despite his unlucky American experience, considered the New World as a place where the individual could freely pursue his or her dreams, without hindrance from the state: "For the comfort of the faint-hearted I can, therefore, declare with truth that here, as in Norway, there are laws,

government, and authorities. But everything is designed to maintain the natural freedom and equality of men." (Rynning, 1926, 87). This belief was also supported by Ansten Nattestad, who spoke about Rynning's wish to provide the oppressed Norwegian workers and peasants with a happier home in America, and, in order to achieve this wish, he did all necessary sacrifice, believing until the end of his life that "America would become a place of refuge for the masses of people in Europe who toiled under the burdens of poverty" (Anderson, 1896, 245-247). All in all, Ole Rynning's book remains the first of this kind written by a Norwegian immigrant in America, and, although it omitted details that might have been useful to immigrants, it managed however to successfully condense a vast amount of information (Blegen, 1931, 102) useful to all those who had been tempted by the mirage of the New World.

Johan Reinert Reiersen

If Johan Nordboe was the first Norwegian to settle in Texas, Reiersen was the first to establish a Norwegian settlement in the southern state, namely Normandy, which would a couple of years afterwards merge with the neighbouring Brownsboro. The historians offer us, though, rather contrasting opinions about Johan Reinert Reiersen. Ingrid Semmingsen calls him "of a different cast" (Semmingsen, 1978, 28), while Theodore C. Blegen considers him to be "the most vigorous defender of emigration in Norway in the early forties" (Blegen, 1931, 177), and Rasmus B. Anderson mentions that Reiersen had been forced to leave the University in Christiania "on account of some youthful indiscretions" (Anderson, 1896, 371). The historian Theodore C. Blegen suggests that he received a bitter opposition in Norway because of his journalistic liberalism (Blegen, 1931, 177).

Son of a deacon, Reiersen was born in Vestre Moland, Holt, Southern Norway, in 1810, he went to study at the university in 1832, together with two other young men from his village, but managed to get expelled. He moved to Denmark, to Copenhagen, where he got married, and started several journalistic enterprises, which almost ruined his father-in-law (Semmingsen, 1978, 28). After a short stay in Hamburg, Germany, Reiersen returned to his homeland, where he founded *Christianssandsposten* ("The Christiansand Post"), a newspaper which he intended to use as a means for the promotion of "education, freedom of conscience, religious tolerance and the development of public sentiment" (Anderson, 1896, 371). Historians

from both sides of the Atlantic admit he worked for the reformation of institution, for the development of the area, and for the cause of temperance, which gained him the nickname "the apostle of temperance" (Semmingsen: 1978, 28; Anderson, 1896, 371), advocating at the same time for the benefits of emigration for the working class. He thus gained people's trust and was assigned a mission similar to that of Cleng Peerson's, to gather detailed information about the most suitable places for settling in America for a group of Norwegians from Agder who were eager to migrate, but wanted to learn more about the conditions they would find there before venturing on such a long journey (Anderson, 1896, 372). Hence, he went to New Orleans from Le Havre in the summer of 1843, and managed to visit the Norwegian settlements in Illinois and Wisconsin, and travelled then to Texas, which he became persuaded was the most suitable place for himself and his fellow countrymen. Reiersen returned home, and published in 1844 *Veiviser for norske emigranter* ("Pathfinder for Norwegian Emigrants"), a book which contained detailed information about the prospects that awaited the Norwegians in America; the following spring, he departed towards Texas with a larger party from Agder, where, as mentioned, he founded Normandy (Brownsboro). His contribution to the increase in the number of Norwegian immigrants in America is significant, as, to further underline the advantages of emigration, Reiersen established a periodical, *Norge og Amerika* ("Norway and America"), in which he published reports on the migration, showed the contrast between the American and the Norwegian society, and avidly promoted the America letters as relevant immigration stories, being convinced that America was the home of liberty and human rights (Blegen, 1931, 183). At the end of 1848, Reiersen moved with his family to Four Mile Prairie, in Van Zandt County, where he founded the second Norwegian settlement in Texas, Prairieville, where he would remain until his death in 1864.

Elise Tvede Wærenskjold

Among the pioneers of the Norwegian migration to America, a young female teacher, who had known Reiersen since their childhood, had a tremendous importance: Elise Tvede Wærenskjold. She was the sole daughter of the pastor in Vestre Moland, where Reiersen's father was deacon, and was lucky to receive proper education, becoming thus, at nineteen, one of the few female teachers of the time. Elise Tvede married Svend Foyn in 1839, but they separated three years afterwards, which was again a courageous thing

to do in those times (Semmingsen, 1978, 29). She afterwards founded a school for girls, but was denied public funding, so she was forced to reconsider her options. She became involved in the temperance movement started by Johan Reinert Reiersen and published, anonymously, a brochure against the consumption of alcohol, in 1843. After Reiersen's departure to Texas, Elise Tvede became the editor of "Norway and America", and generated astonishment among those who learned that the editor was a woman (Semmingsen, 1978, 30). Soon afterwards, in 1847, Tvede emigrated herself to Texas, together with the man who would become her second husband, Wilhelm Wærenskjold. They established in the Four Mile Prairie settlement, that became Prairieville, founded by Reiersen, and became prolific letter writers (especially Elise), actively involved in the life of the settlement. Her husband died during the Civil War, and she remained the single parent of two children, going through hardships and financial difficulties. Despite the vicissitudes Wærenskjold had to face, she never ceased to believe in the Norwegian-American community in Texas, in the benefits of emigration, for which she advocated in the numerous letters she wrote to other immigrants in America, to journals, and to friends in Norway. One such example is the reply letter she sent to T. A. Gjestvang, a postmaster in Løiten, Hedmark, who had learned about the publication in a French journal, and later in a book, of a series of ten denigratory letters about Texas written in 1850 by the French captain A. Tolmer. Gjestvang had sent her copies of those letters, that had been printed in the Norwegian newspaper *Hamars budstikke*, and had asked for her opinion on the image depicted by the French captain. Her explicative letter was sent in 1851, and republished in *Morgenbladet*, in 1852 (Clausen, 1959, 33-34). She defends the Texan way of life: "one cannot praise too highly that real freedom and equality which exists here and makes itself felt in all sorts of ways, not only in social relationships, where the poor are treated with the same politeness as the rich, the laborer like the official, but also in public matters." (Clausen, 1959, 39). Moreover, she underlines the right to vote, which every adult male has, no matter the economic status, as well as the obligation to defend the country irrespective of the social status, while privileges and duties are shared by all. And the core statement is that "It is not here as in Norway, where equality and liberty are found on paper but not in real life." (Clausen, 1959, 39).

Due to her prolific exchange of letters, to her articles and brochures, to her avidity in highlighting the benefits of the immigrant life in America, of its

freedom, Elise Wærenskjold became the most known Norwegian in Texas. Anderson considers her to be "a notable person in Norwegian American history. She was always busy with her pen, and many are the valuable articles written from time to time in the Scandinavian press on both sides of the Atlantic" (Anderson, 1896, 383). No wonder Wærenskjold has been often called "the lady with the pen".

All these pioneer figures from the beginning of the mass Norwegian migration to America shared the same vision for freedom, for a better future, and more opportunities for development. The traditional society in the homeland did not provide the suitable environment for attaining their goals, so they seized the chances that the New World offered. Ahead of their time, they undoubtedly considered migration as a means for personal achievement, first of all, but also for creating new communities free from the restraints of old mentalities.

Causes of the Emigration

The decision to emigrate to a distant, unknown place is never easy and, in order to shed light on the process, it is necessary to analyse the causes that lie behind such a choice. It must be stressed from the beginning that there was a combination of factors that drove hundreds of thousands away from *mor Norge* ("Mother Norway") in the course of a century of migration to America. As Einar Haugen observed, the Norwegians did not emigrate primarily because of oppression, persecution or poverty, despite the fact that many were under-privileged, as their ancestors had been, but they "emigrated because they had learned to be dissatisfied, and because a changing world had provided them with hope of escape from their dissatisfaction" (Haugen, 1953, 22). Hence, dissatisfaction lay at the heart of the emigration, according to Haugen, and knowledge about a place where this dissatisfaction could vanish brought hope and determined them to search for that place.

The causes of the massive emigration from Norway to North America must be analysed together with the influences upon the migration, as George Flom synthesized them: the prospect of material betterment was the first, together with the need for a more independent life, then, the letters sent by the emigrants home, together with their visits to the fatherland, the advertisement of the emigration agencies ranks third, religious persecution

fourth, church proselytism fifth, political oppression is on the sixth place, followed by military services, whereas the desire for adventure occupies the last place, in his view (Flom, 1909, 88). Of course, this classification is rather simplistic and does not encompass all the dimensions of the impetus to migrate, but it does highlight the major factors that contributed to the decision.

There is a certain discontent in what concerns the state of affairs, whether we refer to the economic, social, or religious situation, for, as Theodore C. Blegen emphasized, emigration implies a need to change things, a rupture from the old ways. From his perspective, the emigrant is a dissenter, in terms of economic aspects, but also in other senses of the word, because discontent and restlessness caused by different burdens, along with the hope of improvement with change lead to emigration. The emigrant, he continues, "is necessarily a separatist in one sense or another, for his act means a sharp break with familiar conditions; he turns his back on his accustomed environment" (Blegen, 1931, 159). Hence, the burden of a tough life, with little hope for improvement in the given conditions, often leads the individual to assessing other ways of personal achievement. Furthermore, Blegen considers it is important to study the influences upon the emigrant, but her or his predisposition to emigrate is essential, as there is always a primary problem, a psychological one (Blegen, 1931, 160).

Before discussing the causes that have led to this mass process, it is necessary to take a look at the background of the emigration. Norway, just like the rest of Europe, was going through transformations as a result of the industrial revolution, as well as of the shift in mentalities specific to the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It was a period of progress, growth and transition, when new religious and political forces appeared, while the economic situation in the Northern country was still precarious, not able to keep up with the changes that were taking place in the society. Theodore C. Blegen describes the 1830s as a period of turmoil and protest of the Norwegian *bønder* (farmers), who began to question and criticize the state and the church, feeling confident in their power to change the situation. It was a period of "self-assertion" for them (Blegen, 1931, 160). This need for change manifested itself through Haugeanism, as well as through struggles for reform, but also through emigration.

The Haugeans and the Norwegians Quakers were part of a larger movement of religious dissidents in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its adepts emigrated to America and tried to found colonies where only members of the same faith were to be accepted, and the scope of these religious communities was to practice a sort of "Christian socialism" through a community of labour and property (Semmingsen, 1978, 41). Beyond its religious essence, Haugeanism had a much stronger effect upon the Norwegian society: it stimulated the interest in economic betterment and social reform (Blegen, 1931, 161). Hauge's philosophy appealed to the common people in Norway, deeply discontent with the state church clergymen, acting thus as a "ferment" for the emigration (Blegen, 1931, 163). Above all, Blegen argues, "the broadest significance of Haugeanism lies in its awakening of the self-consciousness of the *bønder*" (Blegen, 1931, 163). This awakening brought important changes in the 1830s, as the *bønder*, who were struggling to survive and pay the increasing taxes imposed by the authorities, managed to obtain a wider representation in the parliament in the elections of 1833, while 1837 was the year the local self-government act was adopted (Blegen, 1931, 164).

Strongly connected with Hauge's religious movement, the need for social reform is another important dimension that needs to be mentioned when analysing the background of the emigration. Ingrid Semmingsen speaks of the emigrants who had in mind views of social reforms that would transform the societies going through industrialisation, with the intention to achieve equality and solidarity (Semmingsen, 1978, 41). The advantages America provided, she continues, were the liberal laws, as well as the wide available land, which could allow the "social utopians" fuelled by new religious or social views to build isolated communities in which they could experiment the ways of living they had envisioned (Semmingsen, 1978, 42).

The historians of the Norwegian emigration to the New World have ranked the causes of the emigration in different ways. If Rasmus B. Anderson lays emphasis on the religious reasons as the primary cause, George T. Flom suggests economic conditions were first to blame when it comes to the decision of such a large number of Norwegians to leave the country and cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a better life. Theodore C. Blegen highlights the controversy generated by the process, especially as there were many factors against, but also supporting the emigration, while Ingrid Semmingsen starts her analysis with demographic factors, focusing on the

increase in the population that took place as the mass migration developed. Nils Olav Østrem argues that the cultural factor as a reason for the emigration is connected with people's perception that America offered a better alternative, and this generates a shift in the focus on the economic causes, as one personal, self-determination and free choice are much stronger sometimes than pure economic reasons (Østrem, 2006, 58).

The socio-economic situation in Norway will further be discussed as the starting cause of the emigration to America, and the discussion will continue with the demographic factors, the religious causes, as well as other relevant factors.

Socio-Economic Causes

The desire to earn as much as possible from one's labour is considered as the main reason for emigrating to America, according to George T. Flom, who supports this opinion by making reference to the correspondence he had had with immigrants or their descendants (Flom, 1909, 67). He begins his argumentation with descriptions of the social and economic conditions in Norway. As Norway is a mountainous country, with nearly two thirds of its surface covered by mountains, with cold and severe winters which seriously hinder agriculture, with heavy taxation for the working class and the small estate owners (especially in the first half of the nineteenth century), with very few opportunities for material betterment, and with reduced possibilities of supporting the rapid increase in the population (Flom, 1909, 65-66), it is no wonder that the prospects of crossing the ocean in search of a better life were so appealing to such a large number of Norwegians. Of all the Scandinavian nations, Flom stated that "the Norwegians are the most discontented, are readiest for a change, are quickest to try the new; and it is they who most readily break the bonds that bind them to their native country, who most quickly adapt themselves to the conditions here, and who most rapidly become Americanized." (Flom, 1909, 66). This view is rather plausible if one also takes into account that Norway was forced to enter a union with Sweden after gaining independence in 1814, and struggled throughout the nineteenth century to develop a modern society and culture.

Historian Ingrid Semmingsen depicted nineteenth-century-Norway as a country "with a predominantly self-contained rural economy accounting for over 80 per cent of the population" (Semmingsen, 1960, 152). Norwegians

earned their existence either from fishing, lumbering, dairying, or farming, most of the farms were self-sustainable and depended on the whims of nature, as the natural sequence of the seasons had more influence on their lives than the international market (Haugen, 1953, 19). For many Norwegians, economic conditions were almost unbearable, especially in the 1830s, as farms and lands were continuously divided and became too small to support their owners; hence, many farmers were forced to seek labour with others, which was again difficult to procure. This led to an almost imminent impoverishment, sometimes augmented by poor crops (Blegen, 1931, 168). Moreover, the right of primogeniture was active, which meant that the estate would become the property of the oldest son, and the families were large, leaving the other sons with very few prospects of ever becoming farm owners in their homeland (Flom, 1909, 71). The only available solution for many was to emigrate, either to another district, or to America.

A "highly developed spirit of independence" (Flom, 1909, 71) seemed to have always been a dominant feature of the Scandinavians, as the idea that "people who may be presumed to have had the Teutonic desire to own land and perhaps that deep-rooted impulse, so often found among dwellers in Norway's narrow valleys, to go beyond the grim barriers between them and the world's broad acres" (Blegen, 1931, 169) came to support the Norwegians' inclination towards taking their destiny in their own hands and finding the most suitable place in the world for them to achieve their full potential. Again, America appeared to be their choice. As Einar Haugen put it, "the men of the nineteenth century were like Adam and Eve after they had tasted the apple of knowledge: they suddenly discovered that they were hungry" (Haugen, 1953, 22).

Another element relevant for the discussion of the socio-economic causes of the migration is the distrust and discontent of the common people towards the official class, which was indeed favoured by the state (Anderson, 1896, 51; Blegen, 1931, 171). With distinct lines between the upper and the lower classes, with numerous fees and taxes that the lower classes, especially the *bønder*, had to pay to the clergy and the officials, along with compulsory military service for the same lower classes, Norway provided few to inexistent chances for success to those who already had not had an easy start in life. In fact, as Flom well observed, "the extreme deference to those in superior station or position that custom and existing conditions enforced upon those in humbler condition was repugnant to them. Not infrequently have pioneers

given this as one cause for emigrating in connection with that of economic advantage" (Flom, 1909, 72). The official class had in their hands the administration of the country made of people who led extremely different lives from theirs (Haugen, 1953, 19), benefitting from all the privileges the lower classes could clearly see were not allowed to share.

Norway was going through important changes in the nineteenth century, just like the rest of the world. It was a time of disruption, when the old rural society was transformed by the growing industrialisation, by the development of transportation and the expansion of free trade, when internal migration reached its peak as farmers struggled to survive using the old ways of living that had been passed on from generations and that no longer seemed to work in the modernized world (Semmingsen, 1960, 153). Of course, the 1800s and the first decade of the twentieth century brought significant improvements in the life of the growing Norwegian people, but the progress was slow and the expectations high, so it was natural that, as Ingrid Semmingsen highlighted, "old means of livelihood had to be abandoned and young people were not satisfied to continue in the trades of their parents. We must believe that there was a spirit of change – with a wish for change together with the necessity for it" (Semmingsen, 1960, 153).

In her chapter dedicated to the change and unrest which Norway experienced between 1865 and 1915, Ingrid Semmingsen highlights the evolution of the Norwegian society during that half a century: the economic growth was greater than ever, industrialization grew more and more visible, a new middle class appeared as access to higher education was no longer exclusive for the higher class, the borders between the social classes became more fluid, universal suffrage was introduced in 1898, new ideas from abroad began to be introduced and fuelled the discussions on religion, literature, and social problems, labour was becoming more organized as unions were being established, but also other organizations such as temperance societies, youth societies, political parties, and so on (Semmingsen, 1978, 107). Semmingsen's assertion "Whenever innovations were introduced, something old had to yield" (Semmingsen, 1978, 107) seems to be generic for the picture of the time. The effects of these innovations were largely felt in rural communities which were going through the shift from self-sufficiency to market production (Semmingsen, 1978, 108). Obviously, the expected outcome of all these transformations – if we consider the *bønder* – was to bring high productivity, but it put significant strain on the individual farmers

who were forced to adapt swiftly to the new conditions, and, as they were clinging to their old ways of farming, the result was the selling of the estate, or high debts followed by forced auctions (Semmingsen, 1978, 108).

Not only agriculture and farmers were affected by the emergence of innovations. The 1880s are particularly important as steamships started to replace sailing ships, reducing the manpower employed in the functioning of the ships, but its effects ran deeper: shipbuilding plummeted, sailmakers went bankrupt, as well as farmers who provided the timber for the ship construction. Furthermore, the competition with machinery was difficult for urban craftsmen, too, as the industrialization put severe pressure on shoemakers, carpenters, and woodworkers (Semmingsen, 1978, 111). To a certain extent, the slow progress of the industrial development in Norway explains the emigration, similar in strength to that of Ireland, as it maintained itself at a rather high level in the first ten years of the twentieth century, whilst the emigration from Sweden declined, and the German emigration almost stopped (Semmingsen, 1960, 155-156).

Rasmus B. Anderson claims that poverty, but also oppression from the officials, and religious persecution worked together to turn the minds of the people in Stavanger “toward the land of freedom, equality and abundance in the far west” (Anderson, 1896, 52). Einar Haugen’s brilliant synthesis of the enticements to Norwegian emigration emphasized the idea that compressed the complex causes that have generated the mass migration: “the hope of social betterment” (Haugen, 1953, 18). The economic motives were the most obvious, whether we refer to the ownership of land, for the first immigrants, or to the prospects of finding gold, as the tides of emigrants grew and the Gold rush engulfed both Americans and immigrants (Haugen, 1953, 18). As ones takes a closer look at the decision to emigrate, one understands that “it was a break with tradition, a gamble with the future, a cutting of social ties which one might almost term a revolutionary act.” (Haugen, 1953, 18).

Demographic Causes

Ingrid Semmingsen starts her analysis of the Norwegian emigration with the demographic factors, as she considers the population growth in Norway in the nineteenth century to be the first cause of this mass process. In half a century, between 1815 and 1865, the Norwegian population doubled, and this trend can be traced back to the 1790s, when the number of deaths decreased,

while that of births increased significantly (Semmingsen, 1960, 151), mainly due to reduced infant and child mortality as the sanitary conditions improved, vaccination was introduced, potato consumption gained in popularity, and a time of peace followed the Napoleonic wars until the First World War (Haugen, 1953, 20). This generation needed labour and employment in the 1820s, when the emigration began; the rise of emigration is synchronized with the population growth, as the nineteenth century became "the century of big families" (Semmingsen, 1978, 100), with children who had better chances to survive than their parents had had, children who reached maturity. After confirmation, at about the age of fifteen, some of them remained to work on farms, others sought work as servants, or as fishermen and sailors, some moved to towns to become craftsmen or clerks, while many others chose to emigrate to America (Semmingsen, 1978, 102). Although the rural communities began to develop more and more, as the occupations varied due to the increasing number of workers and craftsmen, the growing population was putting serious pressure on the resources, many of the farmers and workers were financially vulnerable in comparison with the large farm owners, who belonged to the privileged class (Semmingsen, 1978, 103). However, the 1850s brought a relative prosperity as the country was benefitting from good crops, an increase in the number of work opportunities, as well as from the introduction of railway and new roads. The 1860s came with economic recession as the development of the country could not keep up with the increase in the population. The 1840s generation reached maturity in this period, so this explains the reduced number of work opportunities, an increase in taxes, but also in the number of forced farms auctions, as the farmers struggled with debts, which drove Norway on the verge of a serious demographic crisis (Semmingsen, 1978, 104). Furthermore, the year 1859 was the peak when it comes to the number of births, since almost 55 000 children were born, and this generation reached their twenties around 1880, which brought about a great new wave of emigration (Semmingsen, 1978, 105). There were 71 000 men between 18 and 22 in 1879, ten thousand more than a decade before, and this year witnessed a long and severe depression, particularly in the industries, shipping and agriculture, which generated the largest exodus through emigration in the Norwegian history. Between 1879 and 1883, 77% of the excess of births over deaths was taken by emigration, while, between 1879 and 1893, a quarter of a million Norwegians emigrated overseas (Semmingsen, 1960, 152).

Religious Causes

Rasmus B. Anderson begins his account of the causes that have generated the Norwegian emigration to America with the story of Lars Larsen (Larson) Geilane from Stavanger, the leader of the first significant group of emigrants who had reached the American shores on the sloop *Restauration*. Around the same time, Haugeanism gained more and more adepts throughout Norway. As "religion had become associated with a lifeless formalism which exercised no power over the hearts of the people, and the rationalistic state church lacked all regenerating power" (Gjerset, 1915, 402), Hans Nielsen Hauge rose from the poor and started preaching them the teachings of the Bible, with the sole sincere aim to revive the faith among his people. Hence, he travelled more than 10,000 Norwegian miles in a period of six years, preaching the gospel several hours a day, and writing devotional books and pamphlets (Gjerset, 1915, 403). The authorities were against his movement, which was becoming more and more popular among the common people, so they started persecuting him and his followers; he was imprisoned in 1804, and, until his death in 1824, he spent ten years in prison for no wrong-doing (Gjerset, 1915, 404-405; Blegen, 1931, 161). It seems that government officials, and also representatives of the church, tended to be arbitrary and overbearing, persecuting all dissenters from the state religion, namely the Lutheran church (Anderson, 1896, 49). The Quakers also felt their religious freedom was being hampered by the authorities, perhaps not as much as the Puritans or the Huguenots, as Anderson claims in his attempt to place the religious reasons at the basis of the mass migration to the New World. In his view, religious persecution has led them to emigrate, while in America they embodied their principles in a framework similar to that upon which the American republic had been built (Anderson, 1896, 51). In addition, the strong ties with England, and the international character of the Quaker society most likely influenced the decision of the Quaker group led by Larsen to choose America as their destination, if we consider the information they had about the free institutions in the United States (Lovoll, 1999, 12).

However, the implications of Haugeanism were far wider than those of a simple religious revival: his teachings sparked the hearers' interest for social reform and material betterment (Blegen, 1931, 161). Many of the emigrants to America were influenced by Hauge, as they already showed resentment towards the state church clergymen; hence, Haugeanism acted as a ferment when emigration got under way, bearing an intimate connection with the

political struggle of the *bønder*. As Haugeanism was directed against the clergy and the officials, its most important significance lies though in the "awakening of the self-consciousness of the *bønder*" (Blegen, 1931, 163). Thus, the Norwegian peasants could no longer bear the strains of power exerted by the clergy and this discontent materialised itself in a strong impetus to emigrate.

Other Influences upon the Emigration

In many districts and counties, the first news about America came from the emigrants themselves, upon their return home, or through the letters they wrote to their families back in Norway, the so-called America letters. These letters described the opportunities the wanderers had found in the New World, the freedoms and the economic conditions which were much better than at home. Although most letters depicted emigration in a favourable tone – especially if we consider the emigrants might have wanted to confirm to their relatives that the decision to leave the homeland had been a good decision – some of the America letters spoke of the hardships and difficulties one might expect to find on American soil. The subchapter dedicated to the role of these letters will tackle the issue in more detail. However, as Ingrid Semmingsen mentioned, in the regions where the emigration movement began it usually continued and increased for a long time, particularly due to the contact of earlier emigrants and their families in America (Semmingsen, 1960, 154).

Indeed, a combination of international and domestic circumstances influenced the emigration: favourable accounts about America from the Norwegian settlers, the economic and political evolution in the United States (if we only think of the economic depression in America in 1837, or the Civil War afterwards), or improved economic conditions in Norway in the 1850s, as well as the later fluctuations in the economy and society (Lovoll, 1999, 20). Hence, the "push and pull" mechanism is the one that put people on the move.

There is another interesting factor that fuelled the emigration, starting with the 1870s: the pre-paid boat ticket. Ole Edvart Rølvaag himself left for America thanks to his uncle who had bought him the boat ticket in 1896. Although there are no statistics for the whole period of the emigration, or for the entire country, there are data that show that more than one-third of the

people who migrated to America from Christiania (Oslo) in 1879 and 1880 left on pre-paid tickets. As there were mostly men who emigrated during that time, the following years, 1885, for example, witnessed a rise in the number of women and children who emigrated, but also in the proportion of those who left on pre-paid boat tickets: two thirds of them had embarked on their life voyage using such tickets (Semmingsen, 1960, 154). Hence, the pre-paid ticket bought by a member of the family that had already emigrated slowly became customary during the high tide of emigration.

In addition to the social and economic context in the homeland, namely Norway, Julie Backer highlights the influence of the good economic situation in the United States of America upon the emigration. Thus, because the United States had a dominant role as immigrant country, it was natural that the prevailing conditions there would have a major influence on the size of Norwegian emigration (Backer, 1965, 161). This trend would maintain itself until the beginning of the First World War, and the data show a correspondence between the situation in America and the increase or decrease in the emigration, whether we refer to the American economic crisis in 1873, or to the severe depression in Norway between 1877 and 1879, etc. (Backer, 1965, 161-162). During the First World War and afterwards, emigration was not so significant, due to the improved conditions in Norway, but also to the restrictions imposed because of the war. In the 1920s, the number of Norwegian emigrants to America grew again, though the Emergency Quota Act was adopted in 1921, imposing restrictions on the number of immigrants that could be accepted from each country. This act represented a turning point in the American immigration history as most parts of the land was already taken, the number of workers exceeded the number of available jobs, and the American workers wanted to limit the waves of workers from South-East Europe in hope of maintaining their jobs and salaries (Backer, 1965, 163). There was a new reduced emigration in the 1930s, during the Great Depression, and it stopped entirely during the Second World War.

The Evolution of the Norwegian Immigration in the United States of America

Already from the year 1837, people started calling the decision to emigrate to the New World as the “America fever”, and one striking feature of this special interest was that it affected different Norwegian districts unevenly, moving

"like a dangerous disease" from the coastal regions in South-West Norway towards the north, and then to the valleys in the east (Lovoll, 1999, 14). Nine of Norway's nineteen counties were taken in by the impulse to emigrate between 1836 and 1845, while all of them except Nordland, the northernmost, were involved in the emigration during the next decade. Emigration to America was recorded in all the Norwegian counties between the years 1856 to 1865, creating the premises for the mass migration, as almost all communities had access to information about the emigrants and their new life on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, and the presence of the pioneers and their accounts of the American experience fuelled the migration (Lovoll, 1999, 14-15).

If the first years of the Norwegian migration to America were characterized by the interest for the state of New York, and later Illinois, with some migrants heading for Texas, the end of the 1840s revealed an increase in the migration to the Midwest, with Wisconsin, and later Minnesota as the favourite destinations among the Norwegians. One such example is the Muskego settlement, in Waukesha county, in Wisconsin, not far from Milwaukee, founded in 1839 by 60 Norwegians from Telemark led by John Nielsen Luraas. The beginnings of this settlement founded near Lake Muskego were not easy, as the spring of 1840 revealed the area to be swampy, which forced the settlers to move a few miles south, to a wooded district called Wind Lake, where it thrived for a while, and soon became an important social and religious centre for the Norwegian immigrants on their westward journey. Smaller groups of immigrants moved to Muskego soon afterwards, among whom Johannes Johannsen and Søren Tollefsen Bache, who played an important role in the history of the Norwegian settlement. They were "in a position to play the part of philanthropic friends to poor immigrants in the West" (Blegen, 1931, 119), as they were the wealthy immigrants ready to seize the business opportunities that lay ahead of them in America. Johannsen and Bache seem to have been those who settled further south of Muskego, on the shores of Wind Lake, bought land there and thus the Muskego settlement extended to Norway, Racine Country. These wealthy Norwegian-Americans were joined in August 1840 by another party from Drammen, Norway, led by Even Hansen Heg, an innkeeper from Lier, who had been convinced to emigrate by Bache and Johannsen. Heg had been a friend of Hans Nielsen Hauge's, the founder of Haugeanism, and many of the newcomers were Haugeans, as well. However, he became a prominent figure in the history of

the settlement, as well as that of Norwegian migration to America due to the fact that he was a true leader and a wise adviser for hundreds of Norwegians who had chosen to emigrate. More than that, Muskego "was a congregating point" (Blegen, 1931, 128) for new immigrants, as many of them found shelter there, as well as the opportunity to start small, by being able to purchase smaller lots of land, but to increase their wealth in a rather short period of time. Theodore C. Blegen calls the Muskego settlement a "mother colony" (Blegen, 1931, 130) to many new settlements that were later built by the newcomers who had first stayed in Muskego. Johannsen drafted in 1845 the Muskego manifesto, an open letter written by the Muskego settlers to the people they had left back home, in Norway, in which the immigrants rejoiced in their decision to emigrate despite the hardships they had encountered. Furthermore, this settlement gained its importance due to the thorough pioneer work, being the place where the first Norwegian minister, Claus Lauritz Clausen, preached, in the Heg barn, where the first Norwegian church was erected, between 1843 and 1845, and where the first Norwegian newspaper was published, *Nordlyset* ("The Northern Light"), in 1847 (Blegen, 1931, 131; Semmingsen, 1978, 65).

The statistics containing the number of Norwegian immigrants in the United States of America are not complete until 1867-1869, when a new law required compulsory contracts between emigrants and the emigrant agents, or ship owners. From then on, the police kept the emigrant lists, which were also sent to the Bureau of Statistics (Semmingsen, 1960, 150; Backer, 1965, 156). However, once the migration began to expand, the authorities wanted to have a perspective upon the extent of the migration, so the district governors started to collect data about the number of emigrants from the police, who issued passports for those who left the country, as well as from the pastors, who were obliged to issue attestations for those who left the parishes (Semmingsen, 1978, 32). The available data show that an average of 300 Norwegians emigrated overseas between 1836 and 1842, and their number increased significantly in 1843, when 1 600 people emigrated from Norway to overseas countries. It must be underlined, though, that the large majority of them chose America. The following years, more than 1 000 emigrated, while in 1849 their number rose to 4 000. More and more Norwegians decided to leave the homeland for America, getting close to 9 000 at the beginning of the Civil War, in 1861. At the end of the war, mass migration from Norway began. About 850 000 emigrants left Norway for America

between 1825 and the Second World War, the second largest migration from Europe after Ireland, for this period, if we consider the proportion of the population that was affected.

Three major waves of emigration can be identified: the first one from 1866 to 1873, of 111 000 people, while the second wave was the most consistent, taking away 250 000 Norwegians between 1880 and 1893. 1882 was the peak year, when 28 804 Norwegians emigrated to America. The third wave, during 1900 and 1910, registered the emigration of 200 000 Norwegians. The year 1911 registered almost 12 500, but the number of emigrants dropped continuously, until 1 226 in 1918, at the end of the First World War. Between 1919 and 1930, the number of emigrants varied a lot, ranging from 2 500 to 5-7 000, with two peaks, 18 287 in 1923, and 11 881 in 1927. The American quota laws of 1921 and 1924 imposed restrictions, likewise the "national origins" system, in 1927, reducing the flow of migrants, as Norwegian emigration would have continued to be significant because of the high rate of unemployment at the end of the 1920s (Lovoll, 1999, 38). Before the Second World War, the number declined considerably, and we can speak of hundreds of emigrants between 1931 and 1940. The following five years of war brought a stop in the overseas emigration, and the number of people who chose to emigrate to America from 1947 until 1950 was hardly significant (Backer, 1965, 158).

The migration became a mass process and it is both necessary and interesting to analyse how the decision to cross the Atlantic Ocean for a new living spread like a fever throughout Norway. During the first large waves of emigration to America, the rural areas were mostly affected, whilst the other periods (except for the end of the 1890s) showed far greater emigration from the cities (Backer, 1965, 163). Curiously enough, the migration fever did not spread from the southwest to Eastern and Northern Norway, as it would have been natural to assume, but rather to the inner valleys, to Voss, Sogn, Telemark, Numedal, Hallingdal, and later to Valdres and Gudbrandsal. (Semmingsen, 1978, 33) Nevertheless, America letters, word of mouth, as well as emigration agents reached these valleys, making the mountain people restless, and eager to try their luck in the New World. Ingrid Semmingsen discussed the role of the Norwegian tradition of travel and migration, specific to mountainous areas, in the propagation of the America fever, making reference to the fact that people living in the mountains were those who travelled the most at that time, while the internal migration pattern which

occurred from the coastal districts to large cities such as Bergen made America less tempting for those who already were used to migrating to towns for work (Semmingsen, 1978, 33).

Another factor in the surge of the early Norwegian emigration was Haugeanism. If the Quakers played an important role in the first migration, from 1825, Hans Nielsen Hauge's followers fought against the formalism of the Norwegian church. Again, Ingrid Semmingsen gave us a useful description of the time, speaking of "a picture of societies in which impulses from without were slowly accepted and integrated and where people followed traditional, generally accepted, but never formally codified rules for how one should behave at home, at work, and on great occasions" (Semmingsen, 1978, 34). More than that, the adepts of the Haugean movement valued individual freedom and personal diligence; they influenced the Norwegian society, and hence created the premises for a greater interest in emigrating to the land of liberties and opportunities: "It prepared the ground psychologically, helped to detach ordinary people from the old society, and enabled them to receive new signals and make radical decisions such as leaving for America" (Semmingsen, 1978, 35).

The Norwegian exodus to America was also fuelled by the growing population. The improvement in the living conditions did help, as most Norwegians had better access to food or clothing, but this also led to fewer child deaths, and, consequently, to a significant increase in the population. Families felt higher pressure as they had to provide for a larger number of children, and the solution to emigrate to a land with never-ending expanses of cheap soil was extremely enticing (Semmingsen, 1978, 37). That is why many of the early emigrants were entire large families, often parts of larger groups from their parishes, perhaps feeling more secure as they embarked on this adventure together with relatives or friends (Semmingsen, 1978, 37-38). As previously mentioned, the demographic growth was at the starting point of the emigration, but it also continuously fuelled it throughout its development.

Those Who Left

The beginnings of the emigration from Norway to the New World witnessed the migration of entire families, with men and women of thirty or forty years of age, with several children, even infants, or pregnant women (Semmingsen,

1978, 112). After 1865, when mass migration began, family migration was replaced by individual migration, mostly of young unmarried men; statistical data also reveal that nearly 60% of all emigrants were men, and it is important to underline the fact that men emigrated largely for economic reasons, while oftentimes women emigrated to reunite with their husbands or fiancés. The last years of the emigration (1930s-1940s) were again years of family migration, unlike the first decades of the twentieth century (Backer, 1965, 166-167). Furthermore, the emigration suffered changes also in terms of the origin of the emigrants. As a consequence of the economic development both in Norway and America, nine tenths of the emigrants from 1866 until 1873 were from rural areas, while from 1875 the cities had a higher rate of emigrants, so that half of the emigrants of the last significant wave came from urban areas (Semmingsen, 1978, 113). A possible explanation could be that many of the emigrants from the cities were in fact born in rural areas, and had first emigrated to cities, to continue their migration to the other side of the Atlantic. Ingrid Semmingsen discovered in the emigration records in Bergen that less than half the emigrants from Bergen in the twenty years 1875-1894 were born there, while the others had moved in from the rural districts around Bergen, and "the voyage to America was for them only a continuation of a process of migration in stages" (Semmingsen, 1960, 157).

In what concerns the occupation of the emigrants, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the statistical data collected before 1900 cannot provide a reliable image of the occupations of the emigrants, since most of them were registered with "not stated" occupations, although it is evident that the great majority of the migrants had been working in agriculture, forestry and fishing (Backer, 1965, 218). Most likely, the working class constituted the main body of emigrants: farmers, fishermen, cotters, sailors (especially in the 1880s, when sail ships started losing field to steamships). At the turn of the century, more and more emigrants were coming from fields such as industry or trade. However, considering that various occupations were not clearly differentiated in the old-world order, as craftsmen such as carpenters, tailors, or shoemakers were also farmers on the pieces of land they owned (Semmingsen, 1960, 156). Eventually, if one looks at the years of mass migration, the migration was less divided, both socially and geographically, although few physicians or teachers chose to emigrate. Engineers and technicians, store clerks and office workers emigrated constantly, in rather rising numbers (Semmingsen, 1978, 116). Even intellectuals felt the call of

America, although some of the returned disillusioned – Knut Hamsun emigrated twice to America, hoping he would bring poetry to the life of his Norwegians fellows who had chosen to emigrate to America. Statistical data show that, before 1880, 61% of the emigrants were registered in the group of day labourers, or those with not stated occupations, while the men working in agriculture, forestry, or fishing grew more and more numerous, from 8% between 1876-80, to 20% in 1891-1895, and 46% in 1911-1915. This could also be a result of a better division of the occupations in the statistics gathered after 1890. Men working in industry and craftsmen, as well as trade and transportation were also becoming more numerous. When it comes to women, the majority of them were housewives or servants, only later industry workers and office clerks (Backer, 1965, 173-174). At any rate, the structural changes that had taken place in Norway, the transition from a predominantly rural economy to a society in which industry played an important role is reflected in the emigration of craftsmen from the old world, who were now forced to seek other opportunities across the Atlantic.

Ingrid Semmingsen has focused on another important aspect in her analysis of the migration: the psychology of the migrants. The main question would be if there were certain personality types more inclined to emigrate than others, whether those who left were more capable, energetic, or enterprising, or, on the contrary, they were the losers, the maladjusted or the deviant (Semmingsen, 1978, 115). If one considers the proportions of the emigration, it is natural to believe that most personality types were to be found among the emigrants. Yet, the mass of emigrants was not identical to the Norwegian population as a whole, since it represented a selection in what concerns age, sex, occupation and social status, and this selection changed over time (Semmingsen, 1967, 115). An interesting study was conducted by the psychiatrist Ørnulf Ødegaard in the 1920s, in which he compared the frequency of mental illnesses, especially schizophrenia, in the case of Norwegian-born Americans in Minnesota and native-born Americans in the same state, registering a relatively higher rate of illness in the second- or third-generation immigrants, probably due to the greater strains to which the immigrants were exposed, but also, he argues, to a type of personality more likely to break with their old environment, more restless (Ødegaard, 1932, cited by Semmingsen, 1978, 115). And this restlessness could be linked with wanderlust, with the urge to get away and travel, see the world, discover new things and opportunities, the sense of adventure that most youth possesses

(Semmingsen, 1978, 118). This feeling drove the Norwegian young men in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and in the first decades of the twentieth century to American shores, and their desire to emigrate could be more easily accomplished thanks to the reduced prices of the voyage, but also to the few formalities.

The Voyage

The voyage to America was a totally different experience at the beginning of the migration than during the times of mass exodus. The first Norwegian emigrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean in brigs or barks, and the voyage lasted between eight to twelve weeks, in difficult conditions because of the small and crowded spaces, costing about thirty-five specie dollars, which covered accommodation and water, while the passengers had to bring their own food and bedclothes (Semmingsen, 1978, 54). It took a hired man on a farm several years to save this amount of money, as the salary was about ten specie dollars a year; hence, people tried to find cheaper routes, in harbours such as Gothenburg in Sweden, where iron was transported to America, or Le Havre, in France, where ships were anchoring loaded with cotton from New Orleans, and transported back to America emigrants from all over Europe (Semmingsen, 1978, 55). However, as the emigrants were becoming more and more numerous, Norwegian emigrant shipping firms were founded, and, if in 1841, there was only one Norwegian ship that carried cargo and emigrants to New York, there were twenty-nine such ships by 1850. After Great Britain repealed the Navigations Act in 1849, new prospects opened for the Norwegians shipping companies as they could secure themselves cargo (mainly timber) from Canada to Great Britain, and this led to the fact that, between 1850 and 1865, 90% of Norwegian emigrants took the route to the United States of America via Quebec, in Canada; the significant reduction in the price, to 12 or 15 specie dollars, also turned Quebec into a favourite harbour among Norwegian emigrants (Lovoll, 1999, 28; Semmingsen, 1978, 56-57). After 1865, the transportation revolution which made the change from sails to steam changed the emigration, as it considerably shortened the duration of the voyage, and made mass migration possible. Foreign steamships, from Britain or Germany, had specific times of departure and arrival, they offered meals on board, included in the ticket, determining the Norwegian shipping companies to gradually reduce their voyages, so that in 1875 no Norwegian sailing ship left directly from a Norwegian harbour (Lovoll, 1999, 29).

Ship owners used advertisements in newspapers, or sent agents to the inland valleys to tell people about the opportunity to cross the ocean on their ships, and they were often accused of luring people and convincing them to emigrate. Some of the foreign steamship lines established a network of agents, which travelled across Norway to promote their activity, but they also published advertisements in newspapers, and gave out handbooks, pamphlets, and posters (Lovoll, 1999, 29). There is, though, little reason to believe they contributed substantially to the increase in the emigration, whereas the American so-called Yankee system "was perhaps the most effective propaganda apparatus" (Lovoll, 1999, 30). Different commercial enterprises, railroad companies and even several states in the Midwest conducted a strong campaign to attract emigrants, either in Scandinavia, where they sent agents, in ports of arrival, or even in the Norwegian settlements. *Den Norske Amerikalinje* ("The Norwegian-American Line") was founded in 1913, with half of the capital coming from Norwegian immigrants in America, showing how difficult it was even for a country such as Norway, which had a strong sailing tradition, to compete in the emigrant trade; this line became, though, due to the rise in tourism after 1900, a link that connected the children and the grandchildren of the Norwegian-Americans with the homeland (Lovoll, 1999, 30).

Those Who Returned

Starting with the year 1890, some of the Norwegian-Americans chose to return to Norway. Already in 1920, more than 50 000 Norwegians had returned from America, while the total number of the emigrants who had been re-patriated between 1890 and 1940 could be estimated at 155 000, about 25% of all Norwegians who had emigrated to the New World (Backer, 1965, 218). Because of the Great Depression only, about 32 000 people decided to come back to the homeland, proving that the fluctuations in the migration movement were tightly connected to the economic cycles both at home, and in America.

If the early emigration had a permanent character, since people had left to begin a new life abroad, the migration of youth in the late nineteenth century was less permanent and more mobile, as those emigrants were more likely to move to another place, or return, and many of the late emigrants had migrated only for a short period of time (Lovoll, 1999, 38). Many of the emigrants who had come back to Norway had left from the southern and

western coasts of the country, and the majority of them returned to their home communities. Some of them had worked in Brooklyn and in cities in the Midwest, some had fished on the west coast, or sailed on the Great Lakes, and they all saved money to buy a farm, a boat, or build a new barn upon their return (Semmingsen, 1978, 120). The emigrants of the 1900s, unlike the ones who had left decades before them, wanted to see something different, to see a larger society, to try their luck in the world, and they "assumed that if they were unlucky, there would always be a boat going home. There was a strain of optimism in their parting: they were not saying good-bye forever." (Semmingsen, 1978, 120). Thus, the achieving of financial security and of a certain social status has provided more freedom to the returned emigrants, who knew they could return to America, but could also remain in the homeland in case they would not succeed in accomplishing their goals.

Attitudes towards Emigration

The decision to emigrate to America caught Norway by surprise, and not so few did their best to prevent their fellow nationals to embark on such a perilous journey. Bishop Jacob Neumann, an outstanding figure in Norway's religious and cultural life of the nineteenth century, defender of rationalism, was a fierce voice that warned against the perils of emigration. Neumann was appointed in 1822 as bishop of the Diocese of Bergen, and he had a keen interest in education, economics, but also in historical antiquities; he published often in magazines and newspapers articles on these themes, and he became a thorough supporter of Ivas Aasen's work of language reformation (Malmin, 1926). In 1837, he published *Varselsord til de udvandringslystige Bønder i Bergen Stift. Et Hyrdebrev fra Stiftets Biskop, Bergen* ("A Word of Admonition to the Peasants in the Diocese of Bergen Who Desire to Emigrate. A Pastoral Letter from the Bishop of the Diocese", translated and published by Gunnar J. Malmin in 1926), the first book about the emigration to America published in a Scandinavian language (Malmin, 1926). Typical of the clergy, the book supported the idea that emigration was harmful to both the individual and the home country, and highlighted the difficulties of the transatlantic voyage, as well as the hardships of life on the American frontier. Five hundred and fifty-three copies of the pamphlet were distributed among the congregations in the Diocese of Bergen, while fifty copies had been sent to Stavanger County to be freely distributed there, proving that the church put a lot of effort into straining the emigration.

Interestingly enough, Bishop Neumann's pamphlet was in sharp contrast with the more and more numerous optimistic America letters, which praised the American society and contributed to the rise of the emigration from Norway to America. The Bishop himself mentions the luring accounts about life in the New World: "I know, dear Christian friends, what it is that has enticed so many of your brethren to leave the fatherland in order to pursue a phantom of happiness in the American forests. I have looked up the traces of the first emigrants from Norway." (Malmin, Neumann, 1926). Bishop Neumann continues to stress the bright colours in which the emigrants have depicted everything, but also how they have praised the freedom they had found in the New World, "where no authority stands in the way of their free will, where no salary is asked for ministers and teachers, where no taxes or duties encumber their earnings, where no one suffers poverty and all are richly provided for" (Malmin, Neumann, 1926). Then, Neumann further mentions the promises of abundance that pour in from all directions, the insignificant price of the land, the rich crops of the American soil, the high pay for a day's labour or the high earnings man can make over there, concluding that all these accounts can easily fool anyone (Malmin, Neumann, 1926).

After providing some examples of unsuccessful emigration, of sinking ships, starving emigrants on their voyage to America, of marshy grounds that had buried entire families, or about how difficult it was to succeed in a new country, not knowing the language, nor the climate and the soil, Bishop Neumann warns people to decide wisely whether to emigrate or not. To support his warning, he highlights the dangerous voyage, the privations and hardships endured by the poor families that are many times thrown into misery, but also the natural phenomena and the diseases that the emigrants encountered. Bishop Neumann concludes that even emigrants who are satisfied with their situation honestly warn people not to emigrate with empty hands, so, he observes, "ought not all this make our men and women think twice before making such a serious decision as to bid the fatherland farewell forever?" (Malmin, Neumann, 1926).

Bishop Jacob Neumann continued to discourage the emigration to America, so he supported the publication of Sjur Jørgensen Haaeim's account of his American experience. The pamphlet, published in 1842, in Christiania (Oslo), was entitled *Oplysninger om Forholdene i Nordamerika* (*Information on Conditions in North America*), and depicted the New World

in such dark colours, that the only possible conclusion was that emigration was no easy job, so Norwegians were strongly advised to remain in the fatherland. Haaeim wrote that he had visited many Norwegian immigrants in America and that most of them regretted their decision to leave the homeland, particularly those who had sold their farms and had to do manual labour for others, scarcely earning enough to survive. Besides the hard work these people were forced to do, Haaeim stresses the many difficulties arising from the many changes the emigrants encountered, the difficult journey, but also the embarrassments caused by not knowing the language, while he considers sickness to be the worst of all, which has laid many people in the grave (Malmin, Haaeim, 1928). Advising people not to emigrate, Haaiem, together with Bishop Neumann, have become advocates of the opinion against emigration that circulated among the higher officials of the country, who feared first of all the fatherland would lose its loyal people, but who also felt the population was no longer under their grip.

There were, however, positive attitudes towards the emigration, if we consider the numerous letters that depicted America in the brightest colours, that praised the freedom one could find there. Theodore C. Blegen considers Johan R. Reiersen to have been the chief defender of emigration, as he drew the attention upon the conditions that had generated the migration, shifting the focus from superficial symptoms to reality. Hence, as founder and editor of *Christianssandsposten*, Reiersen began publishing numerous articles on the United States, discussed Norway's overpopulation, but also highlighted that the peasants, the *bønder*, only craved for bread and freedom, and that they were among the most progressive and energetic of Norway's working people (Blegen, 1931, 157).

These contradictory views upon migration reflect the fact that, on the one hand, emigration did provide escape and opportunities for the emigrants, but that the option to emigrate also incumbed difficulties that all emigrants would inevitably encounter.

All in all, the Norwegian emigration to America had a strong impact on the individuals who took the decision to emigrate, but also on their families and friends in the homeland. As soon as people started hearing through America letters about the opportunities that could await them in the New World, they saw the chance to escape from a difficult life in a country that did not offer enough possibilities to all its citizens. The need for change pressed them to

leave and the old mentalities in Norway, the strong influence of the higher classes determined them to seek their luck elsewhere. Moreover, the growing immigration from Great Britain or Germany further strengthened their conviction that emigration was the best option given the circumstances.

ROMANIAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

The Romanian emigration to America was part of the "new immigration", as the Romanians in Transylvania, which was under Austro-Hungarian rule until the end of the First World War, learned at the end of the 1800s about the opportunities millions of European migrants were discovering in the New World. The Transylvanians represented the large majority of the Romanians who emigrated and they heard about America from the German Saxons in Transylvania, who had also learned of the significant waves of Germans that emigrated throughout the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, because of the contradictory data, it is impossible to mention the exact number of Romanians who emigrated between 1890 and 1945, but estimates vary from 100 000 to nearly 350 000 people.

It is important to mention from the very beginning of the subchapter that the Romanian emigration to America was largely a migration from the historical provinces of Transylvania, with the adjoining provinces of Banat, Bucovina, Crișana and Maramureș, which were under Austro-Hungarian rule at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, with very few immigrants from the Kingdom of Romania. The first studies dedicated to this topic appeared as articles in newspapers or magazines. Ion Iosif Șchiopul published in *Luceafărul*, in 1913 in Sibiu, Transylvania, the article "Românii din America. O călătorie de studii în Statele Unite" ("Romanians in America. A Study Trip to the United States"), a report on his study trip to the United States, but also *Emigrarea în America: de ce să nu mergem în America* ("The Emigration to America: Why Not Go to America?"), a year later, in which he warned against the perils of emigration. Perhaps the first complex study was the one written by Șerban Drutzu together with Andrei Popovici, published in Bucharest in 1926, *Românii în America* ("Romanians in America"), after the unification of the provinces with the Romanian provinces, which took place on 1 December 1918, at the end of the First World War. Another important research is Christine Avghi Galitzi's *A Study of Assimilation among the Roumanians in the United States*, that appeared in New York in 1929, analysing the background of the Romanian emigration,

but also the adaption and assimilation of the Romanians in the US. Furthermore, the Romanian-American community was presented by Nicolae Iorga in a series of conferences after he visited America and the Romanian communities in 1930. Later, Ákos Egyed focused on the situation of the Transylvanian peasants, Radu Toma prepared a very detailed analysis of the Romanian-American communities, whereas Aurel Sasu analysed the Romanian culture in America, and Ioan Bolovan provided a demographic perspective upon the emigration.

The history of Romanians is that of a troubled nation, who struggled, at the south-eastern border of Europe, to survive the numerous waves of migratory peoples on their way to the west, as well as the oppression of the neighbouring empires: The Ottoman Empire, from the south-east, and the Habsburg Empire (that would become the dual monarchy Austria-Hungary in 1867). This could be one of the reasons for the assumption that Wolff brings into discussion, that the Eastern European space came to be considered ambiguous and backward on a relative scale of development, while the shifting borders rendered the area all the more unstable (Wolff, 1994, 360-361). By focusing again on the particular case of Romania, the nineteenth century, and especially the revolutionary year 1848 (which created the premises for national emancipation), brought significant changes, as the historical provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia united in 1859, and Romania, the new state, declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877, during the Russo-Turkish War, after a successful campaign on the side of the Russians. Bessarabia, which used to be a part of the Principality of Moldavia, was ceded to the Russian Empire in 1812. On the other hand, the other historical provinces, Transylvania – the largest –, Bukovina, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș were part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, where Romanians were excluded from the government, “unable to resist the united forces of the other three nations: the Hungarian nobility, the Saxons, and the Szeklers” (Hitchins, 2014, 73), although they represented the majority of the population. The Romanian population, as registered in the census data of 1880, was of 2 224 336, and represented 55.07% of the people of Transylvania, whereas the census records of 1910 show a population growth of 27.1%, rising to 2 827 419, despite registering a decrease in the percentage of the entire Transylvanian population, to 53.74% (Bolovan, 2000, 14).

The situation of the Romanians living outside the borders of the Kingdom of Romania, in the provinces of Transylvania (with Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș), Bukovina and Bessarabia, was difficult as they did not benefit from many of the rights and freedoms their brothers had in the kingdom. They could not get involved in the political life as representatives of the ethnic group to which they belonged, nor could they enjoy a proper cultural life, because of the constant pressure from the government, particularly if we consider the Magyarisation policy implemented by Hungarian authorities, which introduced the obligation to study Hungarian in all schools, including those run by the Romanian Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches, (Hitchins, 2014, 143, 145). If the Romanians of Bessarabia and Bukovina did not have a political identity at all, the Transylvanian Romanians were more fortunate as they were aware of their historical position in the area, had two strong churches, which fought for their ethnic rights – the Orthodox church and the Greek-Catholic church –, and maintained strong ties with the politicians from Romania, putting up the strongest defence on their national identity (Hitchins, 2014, 143).

After the Revolution of 1848, the mobility of the population became one of the most complex phenomena, emigration being extremely diverse in terms of regions, social classes, occupations, etc. Within the first decades after 1848, the emigration of the Transylvanian population did not affect the demographic evolution, but permitted instead the workforce to settle in the areas where industrialization began, even in agriculture (Bolovan, 2016, 489). However, the Transylvanian census of 1850 revealed a minus of 50 000 people, whereas the one of 1857 recorded the absence of 90 000, the majority of whom were working in Romania. These were seasonal migrations, determined mostly by the spring, summer, and autumn labours in agriculture; the statistical data, though incomplete, provide an approximate image of the phenomenon, if we consider that about 60 000 people arrived in groups, from Transylvania to Romania, in the years 1863, 1864, and 1865 (Bolovan, 2016, 489).

Romanian Transylvanian leaders became more and more vocal towards the end of the nineteenth century. Having emerged from the small middle class, they were mostly lawyers and business people, and their primary goal was self-determination. However, they were also preoccupied with economic matters, as they understood the inferiority of the Romanians would be perpetuated if they didn't succeed in modernizing the economy (Hitchins,

2014, 143-144). The lack of industrialization in the areas where the Romanians lived was a serious problem, so these leaders decided to implement industrialization in agriculture, because the economic growth could help accomplish the national movement. As all Romanian provinces of the time relied heavily on agriculture, the need for industrialization, as well as for the development of artisan crafts, commerce, and banking was essential in order to be able to advance, and accomplish the dream of unification.

The Kingdom of Romania went through significant changes from the end of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the First World War, as the population grew constantly, private enterprise was encouraged, and as industrialization advanced steadily. Despite all these advances, the implementation of the agrarian reforms and the increase in production, the country remained predominantly rural, and agriculture, in almost the same rudimentary form of the previous century, hardly changed in its organisation, continued to be at the basis of the economy (Hitchins, 2014, 132). However, peasants and farmers could barely feel the benefits of the economic progress, industrialization was uneven, and the economic ties with the other European countries developed, but again unevenly, as it became more and more dependent on the great European powers (Hitchins, 2014, 132). As previously mentioned, the population remained rural, with 82 % of the population living in the countryside in 1912, despite the growth from 3 970 000 inhabitants in 1861 to 5 956 690 in 1899 (of whom the large majority were Romanians, with a significant community of Jews, that was augmented up to 3.3 % of the population of 1912, as a result of the Jew immigration from the Russian and the Habsburg Empires) (Hitchins, 2014, 134); some of the peasants migrated to towns, which led to a slight increase in the urban population. The peasantry remained the largest class in Romania at the end of the nineteenth century, in a society that was far from homogenous, since many of them possessed no land, few of them owned 10 to 15 hectares, while the majority of them owned less than 5 hectares, the minimum amount of land necessary to support a family of five (Hitchins, 2014, 133). However, the old boyar class of aristocrats nearly disappeared as a consequence of the elimination of their ranks, and a timid middle class composed of industrialists, merchants, lawyers, teachers, and civil servants began to rise.

Unfortunately, the harsh conditions the peasants were forced to endure, in addition to their exclusion from the political decisions, made them react violently, so massive uprisings took place in 1907, leading to the death of almost 1 000 people and numerous destroyed properties. The Romanian politicians considered it a national tragedy, but the measures taken after this tragic event were slow and the effects could not be seen for years, since the preoccupations of the governing class continued to target the welfare of the smallholders, who were already past the survival boundaries (Hitchins, 2014, 136). The agrarian reform soon came to a stop at the outbreak of the First World War.

One of the first visible consequences of the First World War was a strong reduction of the emigration, as passports were no longer issued by the authorities in Transylvania. However, numerous emigrants succeeded to flee Austria-Hungary illegally, since most young Transylvanian men were eager to escape enlistment in the army, and many of them fled to Romania, as records for the autumn of 1914 reveal. Some of them headed for America by embarking on ships in Constanța, but the evolution of the war put a stop to this practice, as by 1915 the authorities took measures by severely punishing these attempts, ensuring that all young men capable of battle were enlisted (Bolovan, 2015, 26-27, 31-32).

The unification of the historical provinces of Transylvania, together with Banat, Crișana and Maramureș, but also Bukovina and Bessarabia, with the Romanian kingdom, on 1 December 1918, brought significant changes for the entire population, deeply affecting the mass migration. The Romanians in these provinces finally obtained the national emancipation for which they had fought for centuries, could freely express their ethnicity, use their own language in a country of their own. Moreover, the agrarian reforms introduced in 1918 and 1921 distributed the land to peasants, weakened the large landowners, which were mostly Hungarian, but also diminished the social and cultural roles of these minorities, as the income of the schools and churches came from the land (Hitchins, 2014, 178). However, at the outbreak of the Second World War, Romania had succeeded to unify all institutions in the old kingdom with those from the provinces, although there were still many problems to be solved. The war halted its development, as it happened worldwide, the country remained neutral for a while, but later became an ally of Nazi Germany. All this time, the emigration stopped, and the Romanians

in America suffered along with those in the homeland for the uncertain future.

Șerban Drutzu began his first book on the Romanian-American community by underlining the importance of the largest community of Romanians outside the country, in 1922:

> There is no other place on the face of the earth, except for the boundaries of the kingdom – in which the Romanians, citizens of our Country, are more numerous; there no other country that has a larger group of Romanians, who cherish their national character, their faith, their customs, etc. or in which a Romanian colony manifested itself more from a national point of view as in North America – the United States of America, and Canada. [11] (Drutzu, 1922, 9).

In his complex book on the Romanian-Americans, Toma observes how the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 did not bring essential changes for Transylvania, if we consider its political, economic and social backwardness, on the contrary, it preserved, together with the interests of the largest landowners, this general state of backwardness (Toma, 1998, 5-6). This also increased the discontent of Romanians, who struggled to survive even more than the German Saxons or Szeklers because of their status as a tolerated nation, despite being the most numerous of the nations living in Transylvania.

Radu Toma classifies the Transylvanian emigration from the end of the nineteenth century until the First World War in two distinct types of movements in terms of duration, and other three types according to the areas where people settled. Temporary migrations were determined by the intention to achieve the necessary subsistence means for a limited amount of time. Typical were the Romanian and Szekler emigrations to seasonal labours, during the summer months, to cereal and vineyard areas of Romania, or the ancient practice of transhumance of the shepherds from Sibiu to Dobrudja, the Balkan Peninsula, Bessarabia or Crimea. The temporary emigrations across the Atlantic are also part of this category,

[11] Own translation from Romanian: "Nu există alt loc pe suprafaţa globului, în afară de hotarele regatului, – în care Românii, cetăţeni ai Ţărei, să fie în mai mare număr, nu există în nici o altă ţară un grup mai mare de Români, care să-şi păstreze mai bine caracterul lor naţional, credinţa lor, obiceiurile, etc., sau în care o colonie românească să se fi manifestat mai mult din punct de vedere naţional ca în America de Nord, – Statele Unite și Canada." (Drutzu, 1922, 9).

which also includes the emigration caused by political persecutions of a number of Romanian intellectuals to countries such as France, Italy, or US, who returned to their fatherland after the Unification of 1918 (Toma, 1998, 8-9). Permanent emigrations were mostly directed to Romania, across the Carpathians, but also to America, namely the United States and Canada.

When it comes to the areas where the emigrants went, Toma categorizes the emigration into emigration to the national area, i.e. to the Kingdom of Romania, as we have to consider the Romanian character of Transylvania, regardless of its temporary inclusion within the Hungarian state, but also the secular relations between Transylvania and the other Romanian provinces united in the Kingdom of Romania. It can be thus said that the emigration of Transylvanian Romanians took place within the same ethno-geographic and cultural-linguistic framework, and can be considered as internal migration in a historically unitary space/area (Toma, 1998, 8). Then, the emigrations took place to Europe, as was the case of the Transylvanian Germans who emigrated to Germany, the Serbs and Croats to the area of Yugoslavia, while a small number of Romanians emigrated to Austria, Germany and other European countries. Last but not least, the Transylvanian emigrations to the two Americas, which belonged to the wider East-European migratory movement. The specific resistance of the Romanians to the tendencies of demographic dislocations, but also their adherence to the homeland can explain the late character of the emigration, but also its rather reduced volume (Toma, 1998, 9).

Considering the fact that Romanians emigrated to America in large numbers only at the turn of the nineteenth century, their immigration belongs to the "new immigration", as the US Immigration Commission from 1907-1911 distinguished between the waves of migration prior to 1882 and those that flooded America after that year (Galitzi, 1929, 17). The "old immigration" comprised the large waves of immigrants from Western and Northern Europe, while the Poles, Czechs, Greeks, Russians, Romanians, Slovenes and other Central and East-European peoples were part of the new waves of American immigration (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 257). There were, indeed, disparate groups of Romanians that had emigrated to North America around 1850s, coming from Transylvania, Banat, Wallachia, Bukovina, and Dobrudja, but it is very difficult to identify the number of Romanian immigrants because those from the Habsburg Empire, Austria-Hungary

after 1867, were not registered by their ethnicity in the American records (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 257).

Historical records on the Romanian immigration in America for the years 1899-1928 reveal that 149 826 people of Romanian descent immigrated in the United States; out of these, more than three quarters (83.4%) came from Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina, the provinces under Austro-Hungarian rule, while only 10.0% came from Romania, and 6.6% from other countries such as Greece, Turkey, Russia (Galitzi, 1929, 25).

Our analysis will focus first of all on the first Romanians in America, then on the causes of the emigration, on its evolution, but also on the typology of the emigrants, on their voyage to the New World and on those who returned to the homeland. All these elements will provide us with a broad perspective upon the emigration.

The First Romanians in the New World

Samuilă Damian

The first Romanian who is said to have set foot on American soil is Samuilă (Samuel) Damian (Damien, Domien, Domjen), a priest from Transylvania who seems to have immigrated in America in the eighteenth century (Wertsman, 2000, 1505). Passionate about travelling, Damian dreamt about seeing the world, so, around 1744-45, he left the homeland for England, Oxford, after crossing Europe through Germany, France, and Holland. Damian then embarked for the New World, and reached Philadelphia after short visits in Maryland and New England.

Father Damian is mentioned in two letters written by Benjamin Franklin: the first one written on the 9th of May 1753, addressed to Peter Collinson, an English merchant and naturalist, who became a fellow of the Royal Society in Britain and corresponded extensively with Carl Linnaeus, John Bartram and Benjamin Franklin; the second letter is dated the 18th of March 1755, and was written to John Lining, a Scottish physician who had emigrated to America in 1730 and had settled in Charleston. The first letter does not mention his name, but a "Transylvanian Tartar who had travelled much in the East, and came hither merely to see the West, intending to go home thro' the Spanish West Indies, China &c." (Franklin, 1753). Thanks to the second

letter, from 1755, the connection can be made to Samuil Damian, as the letter reveals Franklin's admiration for the inclinations towards science shown by a priest from a remote corner of Europe, "a very singular character" (Franklin, 1755). Demetrius Dvoichenko-Markov comes to support Franklin's allegations, as he mentions how Damian himself had placed advertisements in the *The Gazette* of South Carolina, for a whole week, between the 24th and the 31st of October 1748 (Dvoichenko-Markov, 1955, 384). The advertisement says that Domjen's (Damian's) native country is Transylvania, that he has studied and made experiments in electricity throughout his travels through Europe, and that he invites the interested ladies and gentlemen to see the surprising effects of electricity, even "be electrified, if they please" (Dvoichenko-Markov, 1955, 384).

It is important, however, to clarify the wrong assumption Franklin makes in what concerns Damian's ethnicity. Damian himself spoke only of his Transylvanian descent in the newspaper announcement. Furthermore, Dvoichenko-Markov relates how many Western scholars at that time knew little about the nationalities of Transylvania, and the mistake may be caused by the fact that the Greek Orthodox Church benefitted from the support of the Russian Empire in its struggle for survival, the Russian Empire being often referred to as 'Tartary' by the contemporary scholars (Dvoichenko-Markov, 1955, 384, 388). Furthermore, there is another important aspect concerning the denomination of Damian, as he is considered of Orthodox faith by some scholars, while Dvoichenko-Markov considers him to be Greek-Catholic, namely belonging to the Uniate Church of Transylvania, formed in 1701 (Dvoichenko-Markov, 1955, 388). Franklin writes that he belongs to the Greek church, but also that he has a thorough knowledge of Latin (Franklin, 1755); this could indicate, however, that he was a Greek-Catholic (Uniate) priest, since the clergymen of this church had the possibility to study abroad, in Rome, in Catholic institutions, and many of them returned to Transylvania and contributed to the emergence of the Latin school, a revival of the Latin descent of the Romanians that would help them achieve their dream of union in Greater Romania (Dvoichenko-Markov, 1955, 388).

Franklin's first letter that mentions Samuilă Damian in 1753 is interesting because it reveals Fr. Damian's view on the character of man when he asks Benjamin Franklin why some nations prefer to remain idle, and lead a careless life, untempted by the example of civilized nations, providing the answer himself: "I'll tell you, says he in his broken English, God make man

for Paradise, he make him for to live lazy; man make God angry, God turn him out of Paradise, and bid him work; man no love work; he want to go to Paradise again, he want to live lazy; so all mankind love lazy" (Franklin, 1753). He considered, hence, that man was irresistibly drawn to an idle life as the one he had lived before being expelled from Paradise, and that the temptation to resist hard work was stronger in the case of certain nations.

Furthermore, we learn from Franklin's letter from 1755 that Damian's story continues in Maryland, Virginia, and then to South Carolina, Charleston, where he meets John Lining. Franklin mentions that he had shown him some experiments with electricity, which Damian had later used to support himself by showing them to the public in exchange for a small fee. It seems that the last letter he wrote to Franklin was from Jamaica, asking for the tubes he used in the experiments to be sent to Havana, and mentioning his plan was to continue his voyage, financed entirely by the experiments with electricity, to Veracruz, Mexico, The Philippines, then through China, India, Persia, and Turkey, from where he would return to Transylvania (Franklin, 1755). Fr. Damian might have been confined in New Spain, or, as Franklin feared, he may have died, unable to return to his homeland. Despite the scarce references to Damian, he remains the first Romanian to have been in America, a unique figure due to his interest in the advancement of science, as well as to his courage to travel around the world.

George Pomuț

Major George Pomuț (also spelled *Pomutz*), who fought in the American Civil War, is undoubtedly the most famous of the early Romanian immigrants in America. Despite some claims that Pomuț was born in Brașov (Podea, 1917, 21), in 1827 or 1828 (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 99), documents that were discovered later show that he was born on the 31st of May 1818, in Gyula, Békés county, Hungary, in the family of Ioan and Victoria Pomuț, and was baptized in his hometown, in St. Nicholas church (Sasu, 2015, 15; Fillman, 2015, 318). After graduating from the high school in Kaposvar, Somogy county, in the South of Hungary, near the Croat border, Pomuț studies at the Law School of the University of Pest, benefitting from the financial support of the count for whom his father was working (Fillman, 2015, 319). George Pomuț was then appointed public magistrate of Somogy county, and he occupied the position in Kaposvar for about a year. He decided to return to Budapest, where he opened a law office which offered him the opportunity to

practice law and earn a rather successful living. However, for some reasons, Pomuţ decided to join the Hungarian National Army, founded during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, along with other Romanians that volunteered, such as Eremia Dragoş, or Nicolae Dunca (who also fought in the American Civil War) (Fillman, 2015, 323). He served as captain in Komárom, in Western Hungary, until the fall of the fortress, in 1849, and was forced to leave the country. Drutzu and Popovici claim that he might have stayed for a while in Italy, from whence he migrated to America (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 100, 103), while Fillman and Sasu argue that Pomuţ reached Paris, and then London (Fillman, 2015, 325, Sasu, 2015, 15), embarking for America at Liverpool, on Monstuart Elphinstone, together with 20 other former members of the Hungarian National Army.

George Pomuţ begins his American story on the 15th of February, 1850, when he sets foot on American soil, in New York. Together with the other refugees, they head for Burlington, Iowa, then towards the centre of the state, where they establish a settlement, New Buda, buy land, and become farmers (Fillman, 2015, 334). George Fillman quotes Guy F. Arnold, who had met Pomuţ, and his details about the Romanian captain in the Hungarian Army eliminate any confusion regarding his ethnicity, as he is described as blond, unlike the Magyars, who were black-haired, religious, of Orthodox faith, unlike the other refugees, who belonged to the Reformed church, but also that he was a striking figure who spoke Hungarian, German, French, and English, though with an accent (Fillman, 2015, 337). Five years after his arrival in the New World, Pomuţ became American citizen. In November 1861, after the breakout of the Civil war, George Pomuţ enlisted in the 15th Iowa Infantry Regiment of volunteers, and Col. Hugh T. Reid, the commander of the regiment, appointed him Regimental Adjutant in December that year (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 105; Fillman, 2015, 348). The Romanian captain distinguishes himself in the battle of Shiloh, in 1862, and is promoted as Major in 1863. A year later, Pomuţ becomes Provost Marshal of the XVII Corps, but is eager to return to the battlefield, and assumes command of the Regiment in the battle of Atlanta (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 106; Sasu, 2015, 16). Before the end of the war, Pomuţ is appointed to the rank of Brigadier General, in March 1865, and the following year, he becomes the United States' Consul to St. Petersburg, in Russia (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 107; Sasu, 2015, 17). The Civil War veteran occupied this position for 12 years, until 1878, and little is known about his life there until his death in

1882, on the 12th of October. It seems that he died in poverty, either because a congestion of the brain, or assassinated, some argue, and the Major was buried in Smolensk Cemetery, the expenses being paid by American citizens in St. Petersburg (Sasu, 2015, 17).

The sad ending of a life full of adventures doesn't diminish any of Pomuț's deeds. George Pomuț became a symbol for many Romanian-Americans, as he was not only one of the first immigrants, but one of the most successful, a legacy for the Romanian communities in US (Sasu, 2015, 301). His military and diplomatic careers reveal his sheer determination, rare intelligence (Sasu, 2015, 302), providing at the same time an excellent example for the immigrants who were eager to achieve success in their new homeland. His education and qualities have definitely provided him a better start than was the case for many other Romanian immigrants in America; George Pomuț, a Romanian born in Hungary, who fought in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, became American citizen and fought in the Civil War, proving that through determination and hard work any immigrant can achieve success.

Nicolae Dunca

Another Romanian became a prominent figure during the American Civil War: Nicolae (Nicholas) Dunca. He was born in Jassy, in 1837, and graduated from Academia Mihăileană, the first institution of higher education in Moldavia. There is evidence that he had fought in Italy as volunteer in the successful Expedition of the Thousand led by the Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1860 (Răceanu, 2005, 34). Due to his bravery and skills, Garibaldi appointed him captain. However, in 1861, Captain Nicolae Dunca embarked on the ship "City of Baltimore", emigrated to the United States, and he soon enlisted in the 8th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 97; Răceanu, 2005, 33). Dunca takes part in the battles of Centreville and Bull-Run (1861), distinguishing himself, and becoming thus captain under General John C. Fremont. The entire regiment undergoes reorganization and is again involved in battles beginning with 1862. However, Dunca's American experience is short, as he dies during the battle of Cross-Keys, in Virginia, on the 8th of June 1862, shot while he was delivering a fighting order given by General Fremont (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 97; Podea, 1917, 20). Captain Nicolae Dunca was buried in the Union Church of Cross-Keys, Virginia, and his story had a great echo in Romania,

as many newspapers wrote about his heroism and sacrifice (Răceanu, 2005, 34).

There are documents that testify that George Pomuț and Nicolae Dunca had emigrated to America and fought in the Civil War, whereas there are no documents to attest the presence of other Romanian immigrants in America before 1895 (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 97). Their stories of sacrifice and heroism have become models for the Romanian communities in America.

The number of Romanians who left the fatherland after the Revolution of 1848 must have been consistent, but the few who have been identified had gained a certain popularity because of their involvement in the Civil War or, as Fr. Damian, because of his public experiments with electricity. Gabriel Gârdan underlines the fact that it is difficult to determine the number or identity of these pioneer immigrants, as there are only American sources that can be considered, and, furthermore, the Romanians were included among the immigrants from the Habsburg Empire, before 1867, or from Austria-Hungary, after 1867 (Gârdan, 2010, 10).

Apart from these Romanian pioneers on American shores, there is another interesting story, though not elucidated or supported by documents (Gârdan, 2010, 6). It is the story of a group of 120 Romanians with their families that had been lured by the gold rush in 1849, leaving Constanța for California, but, because of a difficult voyage at sea, shipwrecked and ended up on Mexican shores, at Espanada, where they eventually settled and became farmers; despite their remoteness and isolation from the other Romanian communities in North America, they managed to preserve their religion, some of their customs and language (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 110; Galitzi, 1929, 19; Toma, 1998, 42; Gârdan, 2010, 7).

However, as Christine Avghi Galitzi highlights, one cannot say that these examples represent an immigration movement of the Romanians, despite the fact that the Romanian-Americans take great pride in these pioneer figures (Galitzi, 1929, 20). Immigration from Romania is recorded in the American annual reports starting with 1881, when 11 immigrants were mentioned, with a total of 6 359 immigrants from Romania recorded until 1890 (Galitzi, 1929, 21). It is necessary to bear in mind, though, and Galitzi underlines this, that races were not classified in the reports prior to 1898, and the figures for 1899-1900 reveal that 93.3% of the immigrants from Romania were actually Jews,

while only 3.4% were Romanians; the proportions are maintained throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, as 89.2% out of 53 008 immigrants are of Hebrew descent, and only 5.5% Romanians (Galitzi, 1929, 21). Furthermore, the reports also reveal how the large majority of Romanian immigrants came from Austria-Hungary: if the period 1899-1900 registered 494 Romanians, of whom 274 came from Romania, 204 from Austria-Hungary, and 16 from other countries, the years 1901-1910 recorded 82 210 Romanian immigrants, 76 551 from Austria-Hungary, namely 93.10%, only 3.5% from Romania, and about the same amount (3.4%) from other countries, mostly from Macedonia (Galitzi, 1929, 24-25).

Although the Jewish emigration from Romania is not the object of this research, it is necessary to mention it in the wider context of the Romanian emigration since it was an important phenomenon, as 50 000 Jews emigrated from the Kingdom of Romania between 1872 and 1929. Their migration has a permanent character, as they crossed the Atlantic with the firm intention of settling there for good (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 6, 23). The period of the mass Jewish migration occurred between 1881 and 1900, earlier than the Romanian emigration. As Drutzu and Popovici point out, most of them were skilled workers, namely tailors, jewellers, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc., and due to their knowledge of Hebrew, their situation was more advantageous than that of the unskilled peasants (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 236). New York, especially Brooklyn, was the preferred area for settlement, with nearly 40 000 Romanian Jews, but other large cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Saint Louis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, or Toronto and Montreal in Canada, became their destination (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 239). The Romanian Jews thrived in the United States as they found the freedom to express their Jewish identity, with fewer hindrances than in the Old World. Moreover, they could become naturalized citizens and benefit from all the rights the American citizens had, and managed to found several successful religious and economic organisations that gave them the feeling of a cohesive community.

The period 1895-1920 is described in the literature, press and correspondence as "the thousand dollars and the journey" (*mia și călătoria* in Romanian), because the intention of the majority of the emigrants was to earn a thousand dollars and to return home (Pop, Bolovan, 2016, 248). As Theodore Andrica observed, the common aim of the Romanian immigrants was to work hard and save one thousand dollars and the cost of the passage,

as the hope of most Romanian immigrants was to assure themselves a comfortable life in the homeland, failing to consider making long range plans to stay in America (Andrica, 1977, 42).

Causes of the Emigration

In the light of the previous data provided by Christine Galitzi, namely that about 90% of the Romanian emigrants in America were of Transylvanian descent, the causes of the mass migration shall focus on the case of Transylvania. In addition, Drutzu and Popovici consider the economic and political situation of the Romanians in Transylvania as the main cause of the emigration, since they were in a desperate position, subject to persecutions, and unable to secure a living because of the lack of land (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 28).

Most historians agree that there was a combination of factors – economic, demographic, political, social, and psychological – that generated the mass migration to America (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 259-260), especially if we refer to the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The same idea is supported by Radu Toma, who considers the causes that generated the migrations until the outbreak of the First World War highly complex. These causes have worked simultaneously, and have generated an immense loss in the population, both in terms of the number of the migrants, but also in what concerns the large distances between the areas of settlement (Toma, 1998, 17). Furthermore, when analysing the causes of the emigration from Transylvania, Toma thinks it is necessary to highlight the fact that emigration affected all the territories, the entire province. State clerks, sociologists, historians, journalists, land owners, the clergy, etc., all agreed upon the fact that the emigration of all the nationalities in the Habsburg Empire was driven by the same motivations, stemming from the very existence of Austria-Hungary, a conglomerate of nations, conceptions, languages, cultures and national aspirations (Toma, 1998, 17).

There are also external conditions that need to be juxtaposed in this analysis, as they have contributed to the proportions of the emigrations: the North-American capital began to be invested in the Southern area of the Great Lakes, rich in natural resources, the lack of workforce, the constant increased

capacity to absorb the labour market in the yet unexploited agricultural areas, as well as in those industrial which were on the rise, stimulated the transoceanic migrations from Eastern Europe, including Transylvania (Toma, 1998, 17). Other relevant elements are the development of the transportation, of the rather accessible railway and maritime transportation, which helped increase mobility. Gabriel Gârdan and Marius Eppel refer to the same conditions, stressing the fact that the increased mobility facilitated the crossing of long distances in a short time span (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 259).

Toma, but also Gârdan and Eppel, make a distinction between the repulsive (or push), and the attractive (or pull) causes of the emigrations to America, as they draw a line between the factors that drove the emigrants out of their homeland, and those that attracted them in the New World. The causes of the Romanian emigration to America will be analysed similarly to those that generated the migration of the Norwegians, focusing on the socio-economic, demographic, religious and national factors, but also on the psychological factors, stressing though whether they are repulsive or attractive.

Socio-Economic

Undoubtedly, the main cause of the Romanian migration to America was the economic situation in Austria-Hungary, the region from which most emigrants left for the New World. This is, for obvious reasons, the main repulsive cause of the mass migration. The Romanians from Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș, besides being subject to the persecutions, were also unable to make a living because most lands were owned by the Hungarian nobility (grofs) (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 28). Christine Galitzi makes a distinction between the causes that generated the migration of the Romanians from Transylvania, and those that made the Romanians from the kingdom cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a better life, highlighting the complexity of the situation in Transylvania.

Among the socio-economic causes of the migration, the insufficient land for the growing numbers of peasants, as well as the poor crops, year after year, in different areas of Transylvania, and the increasing taxation played an important role (Bolovan, 2016, 491). The peasantry was the largest class in Transylvania at the end of the nineteenth century, and the peasants had to make a living by relying on the large properties of the grofs, the Hungarian

landowners, since the average property at the time was of one hectare, an insufficient area for the survival of a family. Hence, they were forced to seek labour in order to survive, with limited prospects, as they could work only for a few months, during the summer harvest, for the lowest wages, while they had to struggle not to starve during the remaining months of the year (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 260). Not only the Romanians in Transylvania experienced this situation, but so did many Hungarians, and Saxons, and the proof for this is the fact that many Hungarians and Saxons emigrated to the United States from the same region (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 28). Moreover, the vast majority of the emigrants belonged to the category of agricultural workers, of the peasantry who owned little to no land at all (Egyed, 1970, 368). The fact that the Romanian peasants were experiencing dramatic changes because of the industrialization generated a shift in the traditional way of life, which eventually determined them to emigrate to America (Neamțu, 2002, 22).

Furthermore, there was a general agrarian crisis because of the low purchase prices that had been set for agricultural products, which left the farmers with very few possibilities for survival, and no possibilities for better prospects, despite their hard work. This crisis of the decade 1880-1890 marked the outbreak of the peasant emigration across the Atlantic Ocean, with deep implications on the small farms which could not cope with the competition on the market economy because of the significant decrease in cereal prices. They became ruined, many sold their lands and emigrated, most of them became agricultural workers that would fuel the wave of emigrants.

Akos Egyed underlines the role played by the lack of land, considering it a chief cause of the emigration. Hence, people were forced to leave their homeland as they did not possess the necessary land to support their families (Egyed, 1970, 370). He also argues that this idea is supported by the fact that most of the emigrants who returned used their savings on buying land, or on paying the debts for the previous purchase of land. In addition to this problem, the social and economic inequity, with mostly poor peasants of Romanian ethnicity, and rich Hungarian landowners, the lack of land or the insufficient lots for the growing number of peasants, the growing instability of small landownership, they all contributed to the increased emigration (Toma, 1998, 18).

Another factor was the tough taxation policy, namely the exaggerated taxes imposed on the peasants, the enormous amount of money that the poor peasants owed to the Hungarian government. These factors, combined with the increased debts at banks and money lenders added to the number of emigrants, revealing the total lack of vision in what concerns the limitation of emigration from the Hungarian rule (Toma, 1998, 20). Moreover, together with the scarce prospects of finding work for the growing rural population, these elements combined recreate the puzzle of a difficult economic situation for the Romanian peasantry in Transylvania which lay at the core of the emigration (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 260). Ion Iosif Șchiopul manages to illustrate the economic situation of the peasants who felt compelled to emigrate in order to survive: "This peasantry of ours, almost reduced to despair, can easily be persuaded to leave a country in which they cannot live and go to a country in which not only they can find work, but also appropriate payment."[12] (Șchiopul, 1913, 295). Dorian Branea well observes how the image of the United States as depicted by Șchiopul is that of a land in which freedom is drastically limited by material conditions, where discrimination is a fact, where the Romanian immigrants are exploited, performing the most difficult jobs, under extremely harsh conditions, with no help from the state in case they suffer injuries while working (Branea, 2017, 40-41).

Since the industrialization was late and slow in Transylvania, the region was unable to absorb the numerous people in need for work, and this had an inhibitory effect upon the mobility of the rural population towards the industrial strata in urban areas (Toma, 1998, 20).

Demographic

One of the repulsive causes of the emigration was the demographic factor, major in Transylvania as high birth rates generated a rapid growth of the population. Hence, the first half of the nineteenth century recorded a demographic boom, which determined many years later, when these children reached working age, high unemployment rates, as the young population from the rural areas was forced to deal with lack of jobs, but eventually saw a solution in emigration (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 260). Radu Toma also stresses the fact that the decade 1875-1885 registered a rapid increase in the

[12] Own translation from Romanian: "Această ţărănime a noastră redusă aproape la disperare poate fi uşor convinsă să părăsească o ţară în care nu poate trăi şi să plece într'o ţară în care nu numai că găseşte muncă, dar şi plată potrivită." (Șchiopul, 1913, 295).

Transylvanian population, and the growth of the number of emigrants coincided with the years when the generation born in the ninth decade reached the optimal age for work. Moreover, the Transylvanian rural world had a surplus of population that, along with the introduction of mechanized labour in agriculture, generated chronic mass unemployment (Toma, 1998, 17).

Transylvania's population increased from 2 073 737 people in 1850 to 2 255 127 in 1880 and 2 908 507 in 1910. The low demographic evolution, of only 10.8%, between 1850 and 1880 was the result of repeated crises, three epidemics of cholera, but also famine caused by draught, floods or animal disease, which determined spectacular fluctuations of the mortality rates (Bolovan, 2008, 606). The second stage dynamics differ greatly, as the region was no longer affected by epidemics, while the progresses in industry, communications, sanitary conditions, the overall improvement of the living conditions consistently reduced the mortality (Bolovan, 2008, 606). Of course, the increase in the demographics contributed to the emigration of the Romanians, who mostly populated the rural areas, as the land could not provide means of subsistence for all the individuals. Along with the seasonal migration to the Kingdom of Romania, across the Carpathians, the emigration to America provided the opportunity for a better life for hundreds of thousands of Romanians.

National-Political and Religious Causes

The national dimension was essential in the case of the Romanians, as they formed the main mass of the poor peasantry, but also because they were the target of ethnic and cultural oppression and persecution. The Romanians in the historical provinces of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina were unable to take part in political life as distinct ethnic communities, while their cultural life was also constantly hindered by the government (Hitchins, 2014, 143). Some of the measures taken by the Hungarian rule were: the introduction of a censoring system of voting that reduced the voting rights of the Romanians, the arbitrary division of the Romanian voting corpus, (Toma, 1998, 21) the surveillance of the elections by the army, the Magyarisation of the university, as well as of primary and pre-school education in the years 1868, 1879 and 1891, with the purpose of extending the government's control over the Romanian teachers and the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic priests, who were considered agents of resistance to assimilation policies (Toma,

1998, 22; Hitchins, 2014, 145). Furthermore, the measures also included censorship of the Romanian newspapers, imprisonment and huge fines on the Romanian publishers and journalists, but also the interdiction to organize Romanian cultural-political events. After 1905 and until 1914, when the emigration of the Romanians intensified, all the governments toughened the cultural and political oppression, one such example being the Apponyi law of 1907, which aimed to close all Romanian, Slovak and Serbian confessional schools and replace them with state schools where teaching would occur only in Hungarian. This law generated reactions among both the Romanians at home and those in North America (Toma, 1998, 22).

The desire of the Romanians in Transylvania to escape the military obligations, as well as the fact that they were forced, during the First World War, to fight against their Romanian brothers from the kingdom, was a powerful incentive towards emigration. It was a torture for the young men to leave their families and to swear allegiance and loyalty to an emperor that had conquered their land, to fight against their fellow Romanians living on the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, so Romanians, like all the other minorities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, sought means to escape from these obligations (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 29-30; Bolovan & Lăpădatu, 2010, 373).

The religious causes of the emigration need to be juxtaposed to the ethnic. As Romanians were a tolerated nation in Transylvania, with limited political rights, their religion was also under foreign regulation. Unable to freely express themselves in their mother tongue, the church was a safe haven that guarded and nurtured the Romanian language and culture. Still, the Orthodox Romanians were marginalized and unrightfully treated, whereas the Greek-Catholic Romanians, that had appeared as a compromise made by certain Romanians in the seventeenth century to recognize the Papal authority in return for ethnic recognition, could benefit from the chances to study abroad and did enjoy a somehow better social standard.

Other Influences

Radu Toma mentions the psychological causes as attractive factors, with reference to the America fever, a collective mentality and psychosis which had favoured the emigration, as the example of those that returned home with savings after the America trip had influence upon the others (Toma,

1998, 22). The displacements from Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries have also been determined by the attractive force of the economic conditions in America over the poor population from this geographical area (Toma, 1998, 23). However, the fact that information about America was available to a larger circle, due to the articles published in newspapers, but also via letters or word of mouth, from the emigrants returned to the fatherland, considerably reduced the psychological distance between the two homes, bringing knowledge about the New World to a large social category (Toma, 1998, 23). Drutzu and Popovici attach a high importance to immigrant letters by referring to the news they carried, news about the lack of workforce across the Ocean and about how easy one could find work there (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 30).

When analysing the causes of the migratory movement, Drutzu and Popovici consider the living example given by the emigrant who returned wealthy from America to be the main cause of the torrent of emigration. The emigrant was in the same situation as the other villagers when he left, but managed to buy his own house and land, to save money in the bank, having an incomparably better socio-economic situation (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 30). The propaganda of the emigration agencies and the shipping lines could not have fuelled the ampleness of the emigration as it would have paled in front of such examples.

Yet, the propaganda in favour of the emigration of the transoceanic sailing companies had a considerable effect upon the emigration. They acted through branches and offices throughout Austria-Hungary, including in the main cities in Transylvania. Some of the most important were: in Germany, Bremen, F. Missler, with a direct line to New York and two comfort classes, at 140 and 165 crowns, Falk&Co., in Hamburg, with travels to Canada and Argentina, with Romanian offices and answers in Romanian, Hamburg-America Line, which made trips to New York; in the Netherlands and France, Holland-America, in Rotterdam, 155 crowns for a trip to New York and Canada, with a branch in Budapest; P. Canon in Anvers, which sold tickets by mail and had lines to New York, Buenos Aires and Halifax, Canada, and even sent plants for free and described the settling conditions in Canada; Compagnie Generale Transatlantique, from Le Havre, which held office in Budapest, for trips to Canada and New York; finally, the Austro-Hungarian-American company Adria, with headquarters in Budapest and a branch in

Brașov, which was meant to draw the emigrants from Hungary to Rijeka, the only emigration harbour established by the law of 1903 for the Hungarian emigrants (Toma, 1998, 24; Dubrović, 2014, 13).

Emigration agencies played an important role in the expansion of the emigration, and, as they were searching for as many travellers as possible, they even broke the law. One such case was that of Canadian Pacific, which, through its branch in Vienna and the provincial offices, recruited, until 1913, over 100 000 young men that were to enter compulsory military service, making the authorities arrest the clerks of the agency and close it. The scandal ended with the closing of the agency, while the emigration issue was transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the Ministry of Commerce (Toma, 1998, 24-25). Nonetheless, Missler soon became the most popular agency among the prospective immigrants, and its name soon became a household name among those who were dreaming about America, as the Missler travel and labour agency in Germany "worked the hardest to bring cheap labour to fabulous America" (Andrica, 1977, 40).

One of the most powerful incentives towards emigration were, undoubtedly, the letters written by the immigrants, which mostly described the large fortunes earned. These letters presented the conditions in America, trying to provide as many details as possible for the family and friends at home. They represent a valuable documentary resource, as they provided data about the emigration: the conditions, the voyage, the settling, the working conditions, the social and national organization of the Romanians in America, their connections with the homeland, their actions to support the national emancipation movement in America. Unfortunately, a large part of this correspondence has been lost throughout the years, with only a few letters being published in the Romanian newspapers of Transylvania (Toma, 1998, 25-26).

Another important incentive, even more palpable than the immigrant letters, were the example of the immigrants who returned home. The money sent home by the American immigrants also played an important role in the evolution of the emigration, along with the return of many of those that had been in America to make a living. Seeing the immigrants return, buy land or build houses had the most powerful effect on those that remained in the homeland.

Toma considers the desire of a reduced part of the impoverished peasants who emigrated to reclaim their lands also to be an attractive motivation. In addition, another important factor was the liberty the Transylvanians could find in North America, as they were free to wear the Romanian flag, to sing the Romanian anthem at the festivities of the organisations, which would have been strictly forbidden in Transylvania under Austria-Hungary. The freedom to declare their ethnicity and to manifest it as an essential part of their identity testifies for the political activity of the Romanian-Americans in favour of the unification of Romania in 1918. (Toma, 1998, 26).

All in all, considering the fact that America was able to absorb, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the waves of immigrants streaming from Eastern Europe, it was in fact the cohesion of both internal and external factors that opened widely the gates for emigration and, as Egyed observed, the public opinion has been looking at it with concern for more than three decades (Egyed, 1970, 372).

The Evolution of the Romanian Immigration in the United States of America

The Romanian immigration in America was deeply influenced by the causes mentioned above. As the analysis continues, it is important to underline the fact that it is very difficult to determine the exact number of Romanians who emigrated to America. Ion Iosif Șchiopul was the first to mention this aspect, referring to the way the statistics were gathered, but also to the temporary character of the Romanian immigration (Șchiopul, 1914, 10-11). Furthermore, Drutzu and Popovici ascribe this inaccuracy to the smaller number of Romanians who chose to immigrate to the United States and Canada prior to 1900, to the fact that they were first registered as pertaining to other nations, then as coming from Austria-Hungary, without a mention of their ethnicity, but also to the lack of exact data in the censuses, since many Romanians were reluctant to being registered for fear of not paying taxes (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 30-31). Christine Avghi Galitzi also warns that the number and composition of the Romanians in the US cannot be ascertained from the annual reports of the Commissioner of Immigration, as the immigration was not recorded before 1908 (Galitzi, 1929, 29). Last, but not least, Gârdan and Eppel stress the difficulties in establishing the number of Romanian immigrants and mention other reasons as well, namely the tendency of the Hungarian authorities to magyarise the Romanian names in

the travelling documents that were issued, or the fact that the ship registers were based on the declarations – either written or spoken – of the travellers (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 263). However, Șchiopul estimates that there were about 100 000 Romanians in America around 1914, Drutzu and Popovici about the same amount, with 15 000 living in Canada, Galitzi agrees, mentioning a number of 91 683 Romanians, with their children, in 1920, whereas Gârdan and Eppel refer to 102 823 people born on Romanian territory as it was reconfigured after the First World War, according to the data of 1920.

With the few expectations mentioned so far, the Romanian emigration was extremely reduced in the nineteenth century, and it began to increase in the 1880s, escalating in the 1890s. It reached its peak after 1902, between 1903 and 1914, with the highest number of emigrants in 1907. As the number of Romanian emigrants to the New World began to grow, the official statistics started to record, from 1905, not only the ethnicity and country of origin, but also the gender, occupation and cultural level of the newcomers. As the emigration unfolds itself, the years 1908-1909 registered a decrease, mainly because of the financial and industrial crisis of overproduction in the US (Toma, 1998, 9-10), but the emigration intensified again on the eve of the First World War. The data, which started to be collected only in 1899, reveal that the exodus did not stop out of the blue, but was interrupted by the historical circumstances around the first major global conflict. Compared to the other territories in Austria-Hungary, with Slovakia that registered the highest number of emigrants, Transylvania did have a high rate of emigration, all the more so as the population migrated massively to Romania as well (Egyed, 1970, 372-373). For the period 1899-1920, the statistics reveal that 137 682 Romanian immigrants were allowed to America, and 35.73% returned back to the homeland (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 263).

It is necessary to mention here not only the number of emigrants, but also the areas which suffered the greatest losses in terms of emigration. Hence, several counties in Transylvania had significantly higher rates of emigration, namely Târnava Mare, Timiș, Torontal, Făgăraș, and Târnava Mică, while the fewest emigrants left from counties such as Ciuc, Trei Scaune, Cluj, Mureș-Turda and Brașov (Egyed, 1970, 373). If 270 people left Timiș in 1900, their number reached 9 000 in 1907, whereas the situation in Torontal was even more dramatic, with an increase from 300 to 17 000 emigrants in 1907. The growing number of people who chose to emigrate to America generated

unease among those who remained, as it is illustrated in a local newspaper from Arad: “Our heart is filled with grief, and our eyes are shedding tears when we think of the sad fact that the Romanian people is vanishing/wasting away from the blessed plains of Torontal”[13] (*Tribuna Poporului*, 28 martie/9 apr 1898).

As we shift the focus across the Atlantic, according to the US census of 1910, 67.3% of the Romanians had settled in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, 15.1% in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin, 8.2% in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota and South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska, 3.1% in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, 2.4% on the West Coast, in the states of Washington, California and Oregon, only 1.6% in Delaware, Maryland, DC, Virginia, West Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, 1.1% in the mountain area, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada, and the rest in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, (0.7%) and in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi (0.5%). When analysing the settlement of the Romanians, Toma underlines the fact that, from the beginning of their migration, the Romanians became part of the urban-industrial type of North-American economy, which was in full swing in the first decades of the twentieth century (Toma, 1998, 44-45). Moreover, according to Toma, who cites the calendar of the newspaper *America* for 1969, the first Romanian rural settlements founded by Romanians were România, in Michigan, Florin, near Sacramento, Transylvania, in Kentucky, and Wallachia, in Minnesota (Toma, 1998, 45). However, the settlement areas chosen by Romanians in America will be further analysed in the subchapter dedicated to the Romanian-American immigrant communities.

Another important milestone in the timeline of the Romanian emigration is the Unification of 1918. It has influenced the evolution of the migration, as it has removed many of the causes that had generated the exodus from Transylvania. Hence, the inter-war emigration was of reduced proportions, without significant consequences for the social and economic life of Romania. In 1919, only 89 Romanians emigrated to America, while 72 200

[13] Own translation from Romanian: “Inima ni se umple cu durere, iar ochiul ne varsă lacrimi fierbinţi când ne gândim asupra tristului fapt că poporul românesc se sfârşeşte văzând cu ochii de pe binecuvîntatul şes al Torontalului”. (*Tribuna Poporului*, 28 martie/9 apr 1898).

emigrants left Romania between 1920 and 1924, of whom only 15.4% were Romanians, the rest were Jews and Germans. The following period, prior to the Second World War, between 1931-1939, about 1 703 persons left Romania yearly, of whom 4.5% were Romanians (Toma, 1998, 101-102). It can be thus concluded that with the Unification of 1918, after the fall of the empires subsequent to the First World War, the Romanian emigration decreased considerably, allowing for a greater emigration of the minorities in the Greater Romania, i.e. the Jews and Saxons (Germans). If we consider that the Romanians in Transylvania and the other provinces that had been under Austro-Hungarian rule no longer felt the impetus to cross the Atlantic Ocean, it can be safely presumed that the unification brought significant changes in their lives, greatly diminishing their urge to emigrate.

Drutzu and Popovici mention and important aspect regarding the situation of the Romanians who chose to return to the homeland after the First World War, namely the fact they felt as strangers in their villages. As the immigrants returned with an Americanized mentality, they could no longer fit in the traditional society he had left years before. Some of them were accused by neighbours and friends of having committed treason for not being there and fight in the Great War, others had lost their children in the war, seeing their dreams shattered (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 184). Popovici substantiates this relevant aspect in a study published in 1937, where he relates how, prior to 1914, the Romanians considered the emigration as a temporary phenomenon, bearing in mind the image of the homeland. An alteration took place because of the First World War, as those who remained there or emigrated shortly after the war decided to settle there for good, and their new quality of naturalized American citizens provided them with the rights deriving from the citizenship, but also with high living standards and better chances of improving their fate (Popovici, 1937, 220). Gârdan and Eppel highlight the same shift, by referring to their impossibility of returning in the homeland because of the interruption in the transportation, as well as because of the improvement of their lives in America, which put them under serious assimilation pressure (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 266). Hence, a growing number of Romanians applied for citizenship, bought properties, sent their children to American schools, forgetting their homeland dreams and growing more and more American.

Naturally, as the US population had increased dramatically at the beginning of the twentieth century, the authorities started to impose regulations such

as the Immigration Act of 1924, that imposed for the first time quotas of immigration for each country, limiting the annual immigration to 150 000 people. This quota system obviously led to a strong reduction of the emigration to America.

As we search for the data provided by the US Census of 1930, which are the most complete, we learn that 293 453 Romanians were registered, i.e. 0.24% of the US population, out of whom 146393 were born outside the US, 125 479 were born in the US with both parents born in Romania, while 21 581 had only one parent in Romania. The higher number of those with both parents born in Romania shows that the Romanian immigrants married mostly Romanians, while the growing number of US born children testifies for their assimilation within the American population. Of these, 88% lived in urban areas, most of them in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, 50.1% (Toma, 1998, 112). Furthermore, Toma mentions that 115 940 Romanian immigrants were recorded in 1940, 20 453 less than ten years before, most likely because of the mortality and returns to the homeland (Toma, 1998, 111).

Taken together, the facts presented above show the sinuous evolution of the Romanian emigration to America, in accordance with the global events that shaped the movement of the population. If the first emigrants were forced to leave Transylvania because of the poor living conditions, as well as poor prospects for a better life, the First World War emerged and greatly diminished the emigration, while the unification of the Romanian provinces brought stability and the freedom they all had longed for. Further on, the inter-war period allowed many Romanian-Americans to return to the homeland, while permitting many others to reunite across the Atlantic. Eventually, the Second World War put a stop on all mass emigrations from Europe.

Those Who Left

As previously mentioned, the Romanian migration to America belongs to the new wave of emigration. Oftentimes, the newcomers were often classified into “good” and “bad” immigrants, the Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians belonged to the first category, whereas those coming from Eastern and Southern Europe, namely Romanians, Slavs, Italians, Hungarians, Greeks, Jews, etc., were considered “bad”. This had a selective

and discriminating character, and was mostly due to the fact that the first group settled with the entire family in the "thorough" America, while the presence of the second group had mostly an unstable and circumstantial character (Toma, 1998, 11).

The well-established image of the Romanian who emigrated to America is that of a young, unskilled man that migrates temporarily and performs low-qualification jobs in order to earn as much as possible in a short period of time. This image was supported by the phrase "the thousand dollars and the journey" (*mia și călătoria* or *mia și drumul*), revealing that most Romanians were looking after quick gains and a hasty return to the homeland. Thus, this image is analysed below as data regarding the age, gender, occupation, the literacy level and the religious affiliation of the immigrants is discussed.

Christine Avghi Galitzi's analysis of the age classification of the Romanians comes to support the idea that the immigration was not a family immigration at its beginnings, since the number of children throughout the period 1899-1928 represents only 5.8% of the Romanian immigrants, while 86.2% belong to the age group 14 to 44, and the rest to the group of over 45 years (Galitzi, 1929, 35). However, Radu Toma draws the attention upon the fact that the traditional image of the immigrant might not be the one envisioned so far, as he mentions that a careful analysis of the statistical data, of the sex of the emigrants revealed that the transoceanic emigration from Transylvania was from the very beginning a largely family emigration (Toma, 1998, 10-11). Gârdan and Eppel consider the data only partially support this theory, as the first to emigrate were the men, leaving their families in the homeland with the intention to return whenever possible (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 266).

Considering the available information, it is more plausible to take into consideration Galitzi's position, further supported by Gârdan and Eppel, who observe that 83.4% of 149 826 Romanian immigrants officially recorded between 1899 were men and only 16.6% were women (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 265). The predominance of men can be ascribed to the provisional character of the emigration, as men were leaving their homes to work across the Atlantic, determined to return to their families as soon as possible. As many of the men had to remain in America, their wives soon followed, so that the percentage of women increased to 20.7% between 1911-1920, only to equate the percentage of men during 1921-1928 (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 265).

Beside data regarding the age and gender of the Romanian immigrants in America, details about their social profile and occupation are also valuable. Since the rural emigration was strikingly larger than the urban one, it was only natural to learn that the majority of the Romanians who emigrated to America were peasants and farm labourers. As Ion Iosif Şchiopul mentions, 90% of them were peasants, and less than a 1 000 of all the immigrants had other occupations (Şchiopul, 1914, 35-36). Christine Galitzi further supports this allegation by highlighting the fact that the immigration was primarily agricultural, as data reveal. Thus, 89.4% declared themselves farm labourers and unskilled labourers, and, despite a change that could be noticed between 1920 and 1928, with a reduction to 31.5% in the number of unskilled workers, the overall character of the Romanian immigration was not altered much (Galitzi, 1929, 38-39). Later on, Toma stresses the rural character of the emigration, stating that the Romanian intellectual emigration to America at the end of the nineteenth century until the First World War was extremely low, being mostly generated by the persecutions perpetuated by the Hungarian political authority (Toma, 1998, 16). Though, if we take a look at the marital situation of the immigrants, according to Galitzi, the percentage of married men is higher than that of married women, for the timeframe for which data is available. An interesting note refers to the fact that there is a higher percentage of widows as compared to widowers (Galitzi, 1929, 36-37).

It is relevant to mention, as Egyed observes, the fact that the first to emigrate were the peasants more advanced from a cultural point of view, who also possessed a certain material basis, while the people from the less advanced economic regions followed. Moreover, the temporary character of their migration is highlighted by the fact that they preferred working in steel factories in order to earn as much money possible in the shortest amount of time, seeking no opportunities for settling for good in America (Egyed, 1970, 375).

Other aspects are relevant for an overall image over the Romanian immigrant in America. Hence, Christine Galitzi analyses the data concerning the literacy level, which evaluated the immigrants' ability to read and write. 35% of the Romanians over 14 years of age who emigrated to America between 1899 and 1910, were, according to this test, illiterate at the moment they entered the United States. Subsequent data reveal a short decrease, to 33.2% for the years 1911-1920, but a consistent decrease, to 3.5%, for the period 1921-1928 (Galitzi, 1929, 40).

The religious affiliation of the immigrants is also important. The data gathered from the heads of the Romanian churches in the US by Galitzi show that more than 90 000 of the Romanians, both from Transylvania and the kingdom, but also the Aromanians, were of Orthodox faith, 1 700 were Greek-Catholic, while 850 people were Baptist (Galitzi, 1929, 41). However, Toma argues that ethnicity was more important for the Romanian community, providing the most important and persistent characteristic of the Romanian immigrant, which was the strong preservation of the nationality. From the very beginning, the Romanians left Transylvania individually, or in small groups, with few cases of village immigration; except for a few compact groups, the organization of Romanians had a national character, with little to no accent on religious or local criteria (Toma, 1998, 51-52).

The Voyage

The situation of the Romanians in Transylvania who decided to emigrate to America was difficult, as most of the times they could not see a way out of their problems but to leave their families in hope of earning enough money to pay their debts or to secure the necessary means for the survival of their loved ones. Many of them would pawn their most precious valuables in order to buy the America ticket, sometimes with the help of a friend or through the agencies which were looking for workers (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 50). The emigrants applied for passports, but, in many cases, they were in a hurry and used the military passbooks, or work cards, or any other identification documents, as some of the agents gave instructions to those interested about how they could travel without a passport (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 50).

Ervin Dubrović argues that the beginning of the migrations from Central and Eastern Europe are mostly linked to the entrepreneurial endeavours of the agencies that were looking for new clients interested in migrating to America, as the significant migration waves from Northern and Western Europe had ended (Dubrović, 2014, 11). The same view is shared by Radu Toma, who highlights the fact that the expansion of the transatlantic companies in Southern and Central Europe in the 1880s and 1890s coincides with the records of the highest wave of immigrants from the aforementioned areas (Toma, 1998, 17). These companies, with their agencies, played a much more important role in the evolution of the migration, targeting mostly the poor peasants, but not those that were so poor not to afford the cost of the ticket

to America. One such agency was founded by the German Friedrich Missler in 1881 in Bremen, which soon expanded throughout the East of the continent, with branches in Zagreb or Timișoara, enticing them with souvenirs and gifts, such as wallets for the tickets; it is said that Missler has attracted about 1 800 000 people, a quarter of the emigrants that have left from Bremerhaven (Dubrović, 2014, 11-12).

Șerban Drutzu and Andrei Popovici also mention that few Romanian emigrants embarked for America in the Austrian-Hungarian harbours at the Adriatic Sea, as Hamburg and Bremen were the harbours preferred by them for crossing the Atlantic Ocean before the First World War (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 50). But the conditions on the ships that took the emigrants to the New World at the beginning of the twentieth century were far from perfect. Documents issued by the American government on the travel conditions between 1905 and 1908 reveal, as Drutzu and Popovici outline, the grim situation of the travellers. Most of them could only see daylight through very small windows during the voyage, as they had to spend most of their time in the dormitories, crowded with the others in bunk beds, using their suitcases as pillows. Meals were served in billycans that each passenger had been given upon embarking, and they were supposed to stand in line in order to get the billycans filled, after which they would go back to their dormitories to eat. One can easily imagine how difficult such a voyage could be, and the state of depression into which many emigrants entered, especially if one considers the fact that it lasted far more than the few days it took around 1920s (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 51-52).

As the legislation toughened through the National Origins Act of 1924, when countries were limited to a strict quota of immigrants in the US depending on the population, the shipping lines and agencies improved the travel conditions, competing for a significantly lower number of travellers. The disembarkation of the large majority of Romanian immigrants in America, about 95% of them, took place in New York, while only few disembarked in Boston, Newport, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or Quebec, Halifax, and St. John, in Canada (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 55). Most ships had New York as their final destination, and, starting with 1892, Ellis Island became the gateway to the United States for millions of immigrants. From 1855 to 1890, Castle Garden had been the immigration station where more than 8 million immigrants first set foot on American soil, created with the help of immigrant aid societies to help the newcomers at the beginning of a new life, whereas

Ellis Island was created by the federal government with the purpose to regulate the immigration as concerns regarding the evolution of the immigration were rising (Cannato, 2009, 54).

After the examinations at the Ellis Island immigrant station, medical and psychological, but also after answering to numerous questions about their lives, the immigrants that are not granted permission to stay in the US are retained at the station for further investigations or to be deported at the expense of the shipping company, while the immigrants that are admitted take the ferryboat that would take them to New York (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 58-59). The start of their new lives in the Land of opportunities was by no means easy.

Those Who Returned

The example of the immigrants who returned to the homeland was highly relevant for the evolution of the emigration to America. Before their return, the migrants oftentimes sent money to their families or other members of their communities. By returning home with a certain capital, most of them were able to buy land, to build houses, keep their children in school, but also contribute to the building of schools and churches in their villages. As Drutzu and Popovici observed, the immigrants usually return not only with money, but also with know-how, knowledge about new methods of work – their experiences open new horizons for them (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 15).

If Iosif Șchiopul evaluates the sum of money brought home by the Transylvanian emigrants at about 30 million crowns until 1913-1914 (Șchiopul, 1914, 21), Drutzu and Popovici mention that about 40 to 60 million crowns were sent annually from America by the Transylvanians, Egyed writes about nearly 12 million Austrian crowns sent home to Timiș within five years, between 1904 and 1909, while about the same amount was brought home by the emigrants themselves, which represented a substantial sum if we consider that a man was paid one crown for a working day in Banat (Egyed, 1970, 376). To this, other benefits must be added, such as the cultural advancement of the emigrants who returned with better skills in terms of administrating their household (Egyed, 1970, 377). The same idea is supported by Toma, who states that the amounts of money sent by the Romanian-Americans were a factor of stability for thousands and thousands of poor peasant families (Toma, 1998, 31). Moreover, the Romanian-

Americans donated consistent sums of money to schools and churches, and they also supported the cultural organisations that were fighting for maintaining their Romanian identity in a tough period under the Hungarian regime. As Gelu Neamțu mentioned, the migrants had seen what liberty and ethnic equality meant during their stay in America, so they were well aware of their rights upon their return in the homeland, revealing a shift in their mentality that determined them to oppose the policy of Magyarization in Transylvania (Neamțu, 2002, 98).

It is important to highlight the fact that the high number of banking institutions in the North-American urban environment, together with the need to keep the savings in banks until their return in the homeland influenced and strengthened the financial discipline of the Romanian immigrants who returned to the homeland after the First World War. At home, they perpetuated these practices by constantly depositing their savings in the Romanian banks. Radu Toma mentions that the savings of the returned immigrants in Făgăraș mounted to about 400 000 dollars, while a group of Romanian-Americans founded a bank in Ucea de Sus, known as The Americans' Club (Toma, 1998, 6).

Naturally, the financial aspect covers but one side of the story. As previously mentioned, the return of these Romanians had positive implications upon their communities, which can be traced back even nowadays, if we consider the village of Ilidia, in Caraș-Severin, also called as *Little America* (Scena9, 2018). As Karda notices, priceless memories are built for the families of the Romanian immigrants from Transylvania or Banat who headed for American harbours in search of a better life, just like all the other Europeans that joined this huge migration current (Karda, 2020, 10). Those who remained could easily see that the earnings of those who left could help them achieve the life they had fought for, despite all the hardships, the longing and separation.

Attitudes towards Emigration

As the migrations were on the rise, the Austro-Hungarian authorities grew more and more concerned with the losses in the population, so they began to take measures. Hence, the first law was voted in 1903, but without the expected outcome. A second law was adopted in 1909, imposing a new series of restrictions (Toma, 1998, 27).

Apart from the measures taken by authorities, the Transylvanian press published articles that were meant to discourage people from emigrating. Thus, the emigration was depicted by focusing on the long journey, on the difficulties the emigrants would encounter, but also on the sorrow they would leave at home. One such example is provided by an article published on the front page of *Bunul econom* ("The Good Economist") on 21 June 1903, a magazine from Orăştie that tackled economic and agricultural topics for the Romanians in Transylvania. The article, written by Vasile C. Osvadă, is entitled "Take care of your homes" ("Grijiți de vetrele voastre") and draws the attention upon the fact that the Romanian peasants have begun to threaten to leave to America almost each time they face a difficulty: "Our peasant threatened lately to go to America if something he doesn't like happens. If he's arguing with his wife, he threatens to leave to America. If he ends up stuck in debt, either by fate or, many times, because of his idleness and debauchery, he threatens again to leave to America."[14] (Osvadă, *Bunul econom*, 1903, 1). After describing the problems and immigrant might face on his way to reaching America, the author concludes that people should be careful not to starve under fences in America, they should renounce the thought of leaving to the New World (Osvadă, *Bunul econom*, 1903, 1). Another example is an article signed by a Dr. med. M.M., published in *Gazeta Transilvaniei* ("The Transylvania Gazette"), in 1914 (20 March/2 April), that warns about the diseases one might catch in America, diseases which apparently affect both the body and soul of the immigrant: "Anyhow, it is certain that America is ruining our people, both their body and, I would say, their mind. For indeed, I at least, find them fallen morally as well, regrettably careless about themselves, about the diseases of their own body"[15] (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 1914, 3).

However, the newspapers illustrated also positive immigration experiences, stressing the benefits of emigration. Thus, a short report on the Romanians in America published in the newspaper *Unirea* ("The Unification") from Blaj

[14] Own translation from Romanian: "Ţeranul nostru în vremea din urmă, dacă i-se intemplă ceva ce nu-i pe placul lui, ameninţa că merge în America. Dacă se ceartă cu nevasta, ameninţă că pleacă în America. Dacă prin bătaia sorţii, dar' mai de multe-ori prin lenea şi desftâurile sale, ajunge la sapă de lemn, înglodat în datorii până în grumazi, ameninţă şi doar şi vrea să plece la America." (Osvadă, *Bunul econom*, 1903, 1).
[15] Own translation from Romanian: "Ori-cum ar fi, e cert că America îi strică pe oamenii noştri şi la corp şi a-şi putea zice şi la minte. Căci într'adevăr eu cel puţin îi găsesc decăzuţi şi moraliceşte, cu o nepăsare regretabilă faţă de sine, de boalele propriului său corp". (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 1914, 3).

praised the effects of emigration: “Our people who go to America earn good money, which they use to pay their debts at home, they buy land and cattle, and reach a better condition and easier living. We also have to thank America in what concerns the intellectual side. People gain knowledge, they grow socially, they gain courage and energy”[16] (*Unirea*, 1907, 275).

In addition, books were published in order to hinder the development of the emigration from Transylvania. For instance, Ion Iosif Șchiopul’s book had the subtitle “Why Not to Go to America?” (“De ce să nu mergem în America?”), declaring from the very beginning his intention to warn people from emigrating to the New World, especially those who easily let themselves enticed and drawn in by surreal promises. After describing the harsh conditions on the steamships that take the travellers across the Atlantic Ocean, Șchiopul mentions the way they are treated upon their arrival, on Ellis Island. One of the chapters is entitled “New slavery” (“Robie nouă”) and it is a criticism of the American materialism. Hence, he mentions how the condition of African Americans has changed greatly in the past years, but also how new slaves stream from Europe; in his view, the previous slavery, imbued in blood, has been replaced by a new type of slavery, less bloody, but no less heavy: the slavery of money (Șchiopul, 1914, 34-35).

The voices that highlighted the downsides of emigration were listened by many, but they could not stop the flow of people who wanted to change their lives, to earn enough money in America to accomplish their dreams in the homeland. Such was the case of thousands and thousands of Romanians from Transylvania who decided to confront all difficulties and head for America, the country they viewed as the land of opportunities from the stories of their friends and family. As with Norwegians, many Romanians chose to disregard the voices against emigration and to confront the unknown, in hope of a better future.

For the study of migration, comparative studies provide fresh perspectives. Egyed also highlights the importance of conducting comparative studies upon the emigration, focusing on different European countries, in order to

[16] Own translation from Romanian: “Oamenii noştri, cari merg la America, de comun adună bani frumoşi, cu cari îşi plătesc datoriile de acasă, îşi cumpără pământ şi vite, şi ajung la o stăricică mai bună şi la un traiu mai uşor. Şi în privinţa intelectuală avem să mulţămim mult Americii. Oamenii îşi câştigă cunoştinţe frumoase, se desvoaltă în privinţa socială, capătă curaj şi energie”. (*Unirea*, 1907, 275).

be able to draw a conclusion regarding the effects of emigration, although data is considered to be lacking. However, he argues that it can be safely assumed that the countries dealing with mass migration had less to gain than countries which absorbed the workforce, and the skills of the emigrants (Egyed, 1970, 377). Toma also considers that emigration has clearly had a series of consequences in the fatherland: on the one hand, it helped ease the effects of overpopulation upon the agricultural sector, but, on the other hand, it generated a massive decline in the Transylvanian labour market, impeding the general development of the province (Toma, 1998, 30). Nonetheless, given the circumstances that created the premises for such a movement of the population, the emigration can be considered a trigger for change, both in the homeland and in the New World.

Preliminary Conclusions

The emigration to America of the two nations reflects the way the same historical phenomenon was experienced by two peoples located in the geographical periphery of Europe, with Norway as its northernmost country, in the northwest of the continent, whereas Romania lies in the east of the continent, at the crossroads where the Western and Eastern cultures meet. Before highlighting the major elements of this cross-analysis, it is necessary to mention the discrepancies between the data concerning the emigration of the Norwegians and of the Romanians.

Hence, due to the early character of the Norwegian emigration, the amount of data is far more generous than on the Romanian emigration. In addition, because of the Austro-Hungarian rule over Transylvania, from whence most Romanian emigrants departed for America, their race was not initially registered in the American immigration records, making it difficult to estimate the number of emigrants. Perhaps the most visible aspect when analysing the correspondences between the two migrations is the chronological. Thus, the Norwegian emigration officially began in 1825, while the first significant numbers of emigrants were registered around the 1850s. The phenomenon continued to develop and reached its peak in the 1880s, after which it started to decline continuously until the Second World War. In contrast, the Romanian emigration began in the 1890s (except for the Jewish emigration from the Old Kingdom which started about the 1870s-1880s) and reached it maximum height in the 1900s, belonging to the new immigration from the old continent.

The second important element refers to the number of immigrants. Norway was the second most affected European country after Ireland until the beginning of the twentieth century, as more than 800 000 Norwegians emigrated to America, while its population was of only 1 950 000 people at the height of the migration, in 1885. The situation of the Romanians is different, as they numbered 2 224 336, people in 1880, in Transylvania, and represented 55.07% of the people of the province, whereas in 1910 their number rose to 2 827 419. In addition, the majority of the Romanians were located in the Old Kingdom of Romania, but the earliest available data on the demographics of the country are from the census organized in 1930, in Greater Romania, which revealed a total number of 12 981 324 Romanians. Hence, the demographic impact of the two emigrations was different, much stronger in Norway's case.

When it comes to the reasons why they emigrated, there are many similarities. The socio-economic causes for essential in both cases, as Norwegians and Romanians chose to emigrate to America for material betterment; despite the time lag and the distance, Norwegians and Romanians wanted to be able to provide for themselves and for their families without fearing for the future. Moreover, the freedom they found in America would allow them to rejoice in a democratic society.

Another important element is the profile of the emigrant, which is again similar for both nations. The emigration was at the beginning an individual experience, as the first emigrants were young men eager to try their luck on unknown grounds, and, as the situation improved with time, the phenomenon turned into a family emigration, both for Norwegians and Romanians.

Obviously, because of the chronology of the two emigrations, the voyage was different. The Norwegians travelled by sail vessels, with the numerous perils associated with such a voyage, until around 1865-1870, when steamships took over the Atlantic crossing, whereas Romanians only travelled by steamship, although many times in the poor conditions that were specific to the third-class cabins.

The situation of the returned immigrants is also interesting to compare, as both the Norwegians and the Romanians who came back to the homeland had different mentalities after having experienced the American emigration.

The society of the New World exerted a strong influence on them all and they brought with them the spirit of initiative specific to the Western world.

It is also relevant to mention the situation of the two countries during the emigration, as Norway gained independence from Sweden in 1905, while Romania unified all its provinces in 1918. These historical events brought joy to the emigrants, who had also fought from a free and democratic America for a fully independent Norway and for a free and unified Romania.

NORWEGIAN AND ROMANIAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA

This subchapter will present the communities built by Norwegians and Romanians in America by focusing on the immigrants' settlement, on the fields they became active in, on their living conditions, but also on the cohesion of the immigrant group and on the role these communities played in the evolution of the migration.

NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

As America-fever was constantly spreading, Norwegians were enticed to a place where the land was immense and free, where they could build themselves a far better life than in the homeland. However, Ole Rynning advised everyone, already in 1838, that "the person who neither can nor will work must never expect that riches and luxurious living will be open to him. No, in America one gets nothing without work; but it is true that by work one can expect some day to achieve better circumstances." (Rynning, 1926, 93).

The US census of 1920 recorded about 1 200 000 people of Norwegian unmixed descent and about 700 000 people who were in part Norwegian (Semmingsen, 1978, 132). As Norwegians at the beginning of the 1900s lived closer than other ethnic groups, more than half of them could be found in three states: Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota. Joranger considers that the Lutheran faith and the homogeneous settlement patterns in different regions helped create a strong bond between Norwegian immigrants and their children. Kinship, common regional backgrounds, and their strong attachment to rural life were at the basis of these settlements (Joranger, 2020, 123). Ingrid Semmingsen correlates the immigrants' strong group cohesion with the majority of marriages occurring within the same ethnic

group. Hence, based on this group solidarity, she highlights the flowering period of the Norwegian immigrant society – *det norske Amerika* ("the Norwegian America") – which occurred between the Civil War to the First World War (Semmingsen, 1978, 133). However, it is relevant to underline the role played by the establishment of Norwegians in certain regions in the United States, since, as Lovoll mentioned, it paved their way to becoming an influential element in the parts of the country where they built their settlements (Lovoll, 1999, 8).

In his analysis of the Norwegian migration to America, Odd Lovoll observes that Norwegians acted like the majority of the colonists in America in the way they built their Norwegian-American identity, but he considers the confrontation with other nationalities has played an even more important role in strengthening their group solidarity (Lovoll, 1999, 75). Moreover, Norwegians were becoming an important ethnic group in certain states due to the mass migration that brought significant waves of emigrants, who were increasingly aware of their culture. Moreover, the lack of a systematic process of Americanization, and the fact that there was less discrimination towards immigrants coming from Western Europe than towards those coming from Southern and Eastern Europe, made it easier for Norwegians to establish and continue to develop their own institutions as they were slowly becoming assimilated in the American society and culture (Semmingsen, 1978, 133-134).

Norwegian-American Organisations

The first Norwegians in the United States were little acquainted with the feeling of community fostered by the different types of organisations which the Americans established for various purposes. During the mass migration, things changed as many of the Norwegians that were emigrating at the time already had experience with associations in the fatherland, as Semmingsen observes (Semmingsen, 1978, 144). Nevertheless, when it comes to beneficial organizations, many were founded by the church, which would gather money from its members. Hence, twenty to thirty hospitals were founded by Norwegian-Americans, the most famous being the Norwegian Hospital in Chicago. In addition, the immigrants founded even more orphanages, old-age homes or other welfare organisations, but also private clinics (Semmingsen, 1978, 138). Their role was vital both for the newcomers, who needed guidance, but also for those less fortunate on American soil.

Besides the welfare organisations, new types of organisations started to appear, proof of the assimilation process that was underway. The most enduring organization was *Sons of Norway*, established in 1896 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as a mutual aid fund society, but evolved into an insurance company that had one million dollars' funds in 1907 and over ten million in 1936 (Semmingsen, 1978, 146). Other organisations were established based on the districts the immigrants were coming from. Thus, the first such *bygdelag* ("the district society") was founded in 1901, Valdres Samband, while immigrants from other districts such as Telemark, Gudbrandsdal, Nordland, and others established their own *bygdelag* associations, with their number mounting to thirty-eight in 1914. As these organisations reflected the regional differences among the Norwegian villages, they focused on the preservation of the rural traditions by publishing yearbooks with articles about the local traditions from Norway, but also on pioneer history (Semmingsen, 1978, 146). Other types of societies include mission societies, women's and young people's societies, singing societies, sports societies, or even literary and dramatic societies that promoted the Norwegian literature (Semmingsen, 1978, 145).

However, these organisations were established with the purpose of creating solidarity among Norwegians in America and increasing their ethnic awareness, in order to preserve their Norwegian cultural heritage. Yet, there were societies that did not focus on Norwegian-Americans alone, but rather on more general purposes, such as unions of different craftsmen, or fishermen, societies of working men. Temperance societies were also growing at the time, and one such society was very successful, and became involved even in political life (Semmingsen, 1978, 148-149).

As many other immigrant groups, the Norwegians had rejoiced in the role they played in the Civil War. After the conflict, the majority supported the Republican Party, but only in 1882 they had their first nomination for the Congress, Knute Nelson, born in Norway, who afterwards became the first governor of Minnesota who was not born in the United States, and a member of the Senate (Semmingsen, 1978, 148). Of course, the success of such a difficult endeavour for an immigrant who was not a native English speaker is not to be undermined, and it brought pride to the Norwegian-American community.

The large variety of organisations established by Norwegians in America reveal their preoccupation for their cultural heritage, but also their status as old immigrants and their gradual assimilation within the heterogeneous American society.

The Norwegian Press in America

There was another unifying element within the Norwegian-American communities, which played a central role throughout their adaptation to the new cultural environment: the press. Obviously, it was necessary to satisfy the need for information about America, in order to enhance the process of adjustment. Furthermore, the press was written in the mother tongue of the immigrants and it provided news from the homeland, published literature that entertained the readers, making their life easier. Lastly, the press created ethnic solidarity with the community, and the existence of a Norwegian-American community cannot be conceived of without a Norwegian press (Lovoll, 1999, 102). If we also take into account the situation of the American press, as America was considered "the land of newspapers" (Semmingsen, 1978, 83), the emergence of a Norwegian press in America could not be much delayed.

Despite the difficulties faced during the pioneer period, with few resources and poor schooling of the Norwegian peasants that emigrated to the New World, the first Norwegian newspaper, *Nordlyset* ("Northern Lights") was issued on the 29th of July 1847, in Muskego, with the support of a group of visionary peasants under the leadership of Even Heg (Lovoll, 1999, 102). James Denoon Reymert, who had a Scottish mother and had moved from Norway to America after spending a time in Scotland, became editor of the newspaper. His knowledge of English and Norwegian, but also to his interest in politics made him a very good editor and Nordlyset soon reached a few hundred subscribers. Yet, it survived only a short period of time, as its publication ceased after a year or two, and this fate would be shared by several other newspapers, because of the lack of money (Semmingsen, 1978, 83). The importance of the Nordlyset is not to be overlooked, though, as its purpose, clearly stated in the first number, would set the example for the following newspapers. Thus, the aim was to enlighten the Norwegians who could not speak English by providing them with news of general interest, especially news of chief interest for the Norwegians (Barton, 1916, 191), but

also by furnishing information about the history of America and of its political institutions (Lovoll, 1999, 103).

The church was also involved in the Norwegian-American press, even directly, through the newspaper *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* ("Church Monthly"), that was first issued in 1851, before the official Synod was founded, and lasted, although by changing its name or merging with other periodicals, until 1956 (Lovoll, 1999, 104). However, the most successful of the pioneer newspapers was *Emigranten* ("The Emigrant"), first published in January 1852 at the initiative of Rev. C.L. Clausen, who became its first editor (Barton, 1916, 100; Lovoll, 1999, 104). *Emigranten* had the motto "Unity, Courage, Persistence", it reached almost 4 000 subscriptions by 1860 and was the only newspaper to survive the Civil War. The newspaper published news from the Norwegian settlements, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of different areas in the United States, focusing on areas that were attractive for those in search of land, whereas important news from the homeland, even articles about the Norwegian culture and history, were regularly published (Semmingsen, 1978, 84). Due to its contents, *Emigranten* succeeded to strengthen the feeling of unity among the Norwegian-Americans who became more and more aware of the ampleness of the emigration, but also of the fact they were sharing the same cultural heritage. At the same time, the other important mission of the newspaper and of the other publications was to familiarize the Norwegians with the American culture, history and political structure, as all the papers were involved in politics and supported different candidates in the political debates, while the issues of slavery and free soil were the most prominent in the 1850s (Semmingsen, 1978, 84-85).

It is important to refer to the impressive number of newspapers, which reveal that the Norwegian press in the United States had an explosive development, with about 565 papers and magazines existed between 1865 and 1914, although the large majority appeared for a short while or were absorbed by other newspapers (Semmingsen, 1978, 138; Lovoll, 1999, 173). This shows how easy it was to establish a newspaper, but also how difficult it was to publish with a certain continuity. Moreover, Lovoll argues that the numerous publications reflect the factions in the ethnic group which displayed solidarity to the outside world; yet, there were quarrels, polemics, disagreements, attacks without mercy, and envy, and these could even constitute reasons for the existence of a newspaper (Lovoll, 1999, 173).

The first Norwegian-American magazine was the *Billed-Magazin* ("The Illustrated Magazine"), which appeared in Madison, Wisconsin, between 1868-1869. It represented an extremely valuable resource for the historians of the emigration due to the articles written by Svein Nilsson about the early Norwegian settlements, and the interviews he took to the pioneers (Barton, 1916, 205). Another important paper was *Decorah-Posten* ("The Decorah Post"), founded in Decorah, Iowa, as a non-political newspaper (Semmingsen, 1978, 138). This journal reached national appreciation after starting humbly in a small town, and its name soon became associated with the immigrant life. Published twice a week, between 1894 and 1942, *Decorah-Posten* reached around 37 000 Norwegian-American homes in 1900, most of them in the Upper Midwest, which can be attributed both to the large waves of immigrants in the 1880s, but also to the skilful leadership of its founder, Brynild Anundsen, who awarded prizes to the new subscribers and succeeded to make good profit (Lovoll, 2010, 149). In addition, there were many other successful papers, such as *Skandinaven* ("The Scandinavian"), *Minneapolis Tidende* ("The Minneapolis Times"), published between 1887 and 1935, *Budstikken* ("The Message"), *Nordisk Tidende* ("The Nordic Times"), *Washington-Posten* ("The Washington Post"), *Normanden* ("The Norwegian"), and many others.

As Lovoll observes, the role of the pioneer press was informative, but also educational, as it helped the Norwegians in America become aware of their political power. Moreover, the press became fundamental in the Norwegian community as it explained America to its immigrants (Lovoll, 1999, 105). Furthermore, the press sought support in a population with a wide geographical spread, but of common national origin, carrying news from large areas; and, "by binding together the individual groups of Norwegians, the Norwegian-American newspapers gave meaning to the concept of a Norwegian America" (Lovoll, 1999, 175-176). The Norwegian-American press was hence the unifying element within the Norwegian-American community that was so divided by focusing on religious and local specificities.

The Norwegian Churches in America

Considering the fact that the first Norwegian immigrants in America were the Haugeans that sailed across the Atlantic on board of *Restauration* in 1825, it can be assumed that religion played a very important role in the life of the emigrants that left Norway in search of a freer life in the New World.

Yet, Odd Lovoll observes how the authorities in the homeland did not do much for the physical or the spiritual needs of the immigrants, despite the fact that there was need for people with university training, both doctors and pastors, to work within the Norwegian colonies scattered all around America (Lovoll, 1999, 75).

In order to understand the situation of the immigrant churches, it is necessary to observe the religious situation in Norway in the nineteenth century. Hence, the Lutheran church became State Church in Norway starting with 1536, and the entire population belonged to the State church, except for very few dissenters, as Olaf Norlie mentions (Norlie, 1925, 188). However, there were three main tendencies within the Norwegian Lutheran church at the time: the high church tendency, which highly respected the Church as a divine institution, while the Word and Sacraments as Means of Grace, tendency which was more characteristic for the pastors and the upper class; the second tendency was the low church view, which called for personal experiences and prayer meetings, but was opposed by the pastors, making the high church tendency dangerous to the adepts of the low church, adepts such as the Haugeans; the third tendency, and the most widespread, was the broad church view, that was a mixture of the two, acknowledging both the importance of ministry and ceremonies, and that of a life lived according to the teachings of the Gospel (Norlie, 1925, 189-190). If the Norwegian Lutherans of high church strongly felt the need for a church at the beginning of the mass migration, those of low church resorted to prayer meetings, to which each would bring his or her own Bible and hymn book, they would pray, sing, but also discuss about sins and grace. Usually, these groups had leaders that would read from the Bible and guide the meetings. Olaf Norlie writes that the first lay preacher among the Norwegian settlers was Ole Olson Hettletvedt, who had been one of the first pioneers in America, where he preached from 1825 until in 1849, when he died (Norlie, 1925, 193).

The Haugean Lutherans attempted to find stable preachers among their newly built American settlements. If men like Jørgen Pedersen or Ole Olson Heier preached for a while, but soon joined Mormon churches, Elling Eielsen was considered one of the greatest lay preachers among Norwegian-Americans. After he had travelled all across Norway in the footsteps of Hans Nilsen Hauge and had suffered mocking, even imprisonment for his beliefs, Eielsen immigrated in America in 1839 and preached in Chicago the very day he arrived there. Elling Eielsen remained in the memory of his fellow

Norwegian-Americans as the one who built the first church edifice, in 1841, the one who established congregations and organized the first Norwegian synod in America, the first Norwegian to publish a book in America, the one that fought for the teaching of the children in both Norwegian and English, the one who contributed to the founding of three higher schools in Illinois and Wisconsin, and the one that did missionary work among the Native Americans. Nevertheless, his highest achievement is the organisation of the believers in congregations, but also his commitment to lay preaching, the efforts he put into preventing the high church tendency (Norlie, 1925, 194-195).

As stated previously, the Church of Norway and its hierarchs showed almost no concern for the Norwegians in America, despite the fact that certain groups of immigrants had tried to recruit a leader from the Lutheran Church in the fatherland, thus, the trained pastors who were interested in doing missionary work in America had to act on their own. They were not so numerous, though, as many preferred to be appointed in Norway than to venture into the New World. Yet, famous names such as Koren, Brandt, Munch, Preus or Dietrichson, emigrated and became pastors for the immigrants (Lovoll, 1999, 76).

Ingrid Semmingsen also mentions the role played by university-trained pastors, of whom some did not want to adapt to the American environment and continued to act as in the homeland, resorting to confining circles, forming an elite in America, keeping common people at a distance and opposing lay preachers, but this also resulted in a diminishing of the pastors' leadership within the Norwegian immigrant group (Semmingsen, 1978, 134).

The first Norwegian Lutheran congregation was organized in Muskego, in 1843, by Claus Lauritz Clausen, the son of a Danish merchant and a representative of the high church tendency. Both Clausen and Dietrichson, who came to America a year later, put their efforts into building proper Norwegian Lutheran congregations, abiding by the official laws of the church, and opposed lay preachers such as Eielsen, accusing him of dividing the believers. Eventually, they succeeded to impose the Norwegian Synod as the official Norwegian church in America in the 1850s, which had about twenty-nine ministers and one hundred congregations in 1860 (Lovoll, 1999, 87). With time, new leaders emerged, and they considered education to be essential, so they established theological seminaries, while the adepts of the

low church participated, under the influence of American Protestantism, in missionary work, but also in educational work or various movements. They even founded Augsburg College in Minneapolis, where professors such as Sven Oftedal or Georg Sverdrup had great influence and were editors of the newspaper *Folkebladet* ("The People's Paper") (Semmingsen, 1978, 135-136).

Some of the Norwegians in America were of other faiths: either Quakers, Mormons, Methodists, or Baptists, and the religious pluralism reflected also the religious confusion among the Norwegian immigrants, but also the influence exerted by the American church bodies. Still, Semmingsen argues that the long and bitter conflicts revealed the intense commitment to religious institutions, as the Norwegians became more and more aware of questions of faith, while they also engaged in a rivalry in what concerns the building of churches. Moreover, their devotion to the church enhanced their interest in higher education, which made them build schools with poor resources in the beginning, but which increased their standards and they became academies, colleges and seminaries that eventually became centres for the preservation of the Norwegian language and literature (Semmingsen, 1978, 137).

All in all, the church played an important role in the lives of the Norwegian immigrants, although, at times, the clash between the low-church and the high-church tendencies generated divergences of opinion. Moreover, despite the conflicts that emerged throughout the process of acculturation undergone by the immigrants, the church offered guidance to the newcomers, supported newspapers to reach to their close or distant followers, and, above all, fought ardently for the preservation of the Norwegian language and cultural heritage among the Norwegian-Americans.

Schools

The school has always been an essential element in the American democracy, even in its early times that coincided with the pioneer settlement, when the schools were rather primitive, with poorly qualified teachers. When Norwegians reached American shores, they were not among the nationalities with high rates of illiteracy. Thus, data reveal that 17% of them were illiterate in 1880, 10,6% in 1900, whereas the illiteracy rate among Norwegian immigrants was of only 6% in 1920 (Norlie, 1925, 213). Yet, the Norwegians

adopted a singular position among Scandinavians as they questioned the American school, considering it ineffective and godless (Lovoll, 1999, 98). However, Norwegians in general did accept and support the public schools, as their children could learn English, but certain church figures disapproved of the fact that religion was not taught in American schools.

If Elling Eielsen saw the school as useful for his followers, and encouraged them to send their children to school, J. W. C. Dietrichson got more involved in the situation of the schools in the Norwegian settlements and established a congregational school in Koshkonong, paying the teacher from his own means, so that the children could have a school where they could be taught the doctrine of the church. With time, as new congregations were established, congregational schools also began to appear in the settlements, and their purpose was to function as complementary to the public schools, which were open only few months a year. Some congregational schools were itinerant, moving from house to house for certain periods of time. Still, it is important to highlight the support of the settlers for the American school, throughout the 1850s, a period when the Norwegian Synod started to grow, receiving ministers from Norway, which also led to a controversy over the future of the Norwegian-American children, as the church considered the children were not attracted to the study of English (Lovoll, 1999, 100-101). The objections of the church leaders were directed against the poorly trained teachers, that were constantly being changed, against the lack of religion in the Yankee schools, as they called them, but also against education in English, since they believed the first years in school should be taught in the children's mother tongue (Semmingsen, 1978, 93). But this battle would be lost by the church leaders, all with university training, as Knud Langeland, a schoolteacher and editor of *Skandinaven* ("The Scandinavian"), opposed the Synod and supported the American schools, drawing attention to the financial sacrifices that the schools needed from the immigrants, but also to the fact that children should learn English from an early age, in schools, in order to become good American citizens (Semmingsen, 1978, 94; Lovoll, 1999, 101). In the end, in the spirit of the New World they were adjusting to, the supporters of the school prevailed, ensuring the right to public education for the children of Norwegian-Americans.

It is necessary to point out the establishment of higher education institutions by the Norwegians in America, in which the Lutheran church played an important role. Hence, the interest of the pastors in education led to the

founding of Luther College in 1863, in Decorah, Iowa, and of St. Olaf College in 1874, in Northfield, Minnesota. These institutions soon developed and were constantly supported by individuals and organisations (Semmingsen, 1978, 95). However, their continuous support helped these colleges exist today. In addition, several Norwegian-Americans became successful and, due to the liberal and open views in the American society, found their place at American institutions. One such example is Agnes Wergeland, who is first of all known as the first Norwegian woman to hold a Ph.D. degree, who emigrated in 1890, became professor of history at the University of Wyoming, and was also a writer, the author of *Amerika og andre digte* ("America and other Poems", 1912), a remarkable publication, in which she depicts America through the eyes of a female immigrant (Grøtta, 2020).

Ingrid Semmingsen's conclusion was that the immigrants shaped their own lives in the new country, and this developed from periphery to centre, from congregation to church body, as they built their own institutions as they were participating in the building of the American society (Semmingsen, 1978, 95). This is not to be wondered at considering the fact that the emigrants left the safe, but poor homeland in search of a better life, ready to face the difficulties arising from adjusting to the immense land of America.

ROMANIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

It is important to begin by mentioning the states in which the Romanians preferred to settle, in order to trace the communities they built in the United States of America. Thus, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois and New Jersey gathered the highest numbers of Romanian-Americans, particularly the large industrial centres. Other states such as Indiana, California, Minnesota, North Dakota, Missouri, Massachusetts and Connecticut also had more than 1,000 Romanian immigrants each (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 114). This distribution is not necessarily linked to their traditional occupation, farming and agriculture, but rather to the connections they had prior to emigrating, to their acquaintances who had emigrated before them, but also to the opportunities for work.

Radu Toma managed to synthesise the elements that make up the Romanian immigrant in North America. Thus, he considers the Romanian immigrant in America from the end of the nineteenth until the First World War to be the connective link between two different socio-economic and culturally-

linguistic environments, but also an extreme form of breaking with the previous traditional life and a novel, original form of adapting and adjusting to the new milieu (Toma, 1998, 49).

This difference between the two environments would be felt from the moment the Romanians set foot on American soil. Christine Avghi Galitzi considers their concentration in the cities to be the striking feature in their distribution in the United States in America. Despite their rural provenance, the large majority of the Romanians settled in cities, but this was not as much a personal choice, but rather the effect of a series of circumstances that determined them to enter into industry and break away from the occupation of their ancestors (Galitzi, 1929, 62). When analysing this important aspect, it is necessary to think of the unseen development the United States were going through at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The industry was flourishing, especially in the North-East, providing better opportunities for the Romanian immigrants than farming (Galitzi, 1929, 64; Toma, 1998, 46). This is not difficult to grasp, especially if we take into consideration the fact that they offered job opportunities to the immigrants as soon as they arrived, since the companies sent recruiting agents in the ports, agents that could speak their language, offering jobs to entire groups. This was very enticing for the Romanians, who couldn’t speak English and were glad to be able to find jobs that allowed them to work together with their kinsmen (Galitzi, 1929, 64). Many of them worked in iron or steel factories or in the exploitation of coal mines, where they could earn according to the quantity they extracted, allowing them to achieve more in a short period of time, despite the difficulty of the work they performed (Toma, 1998, 47). Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the Romanians, because they were mostly unskilled workers, were open to any kind of work, so their traditional occupation did not guide their distribution across the United States, but rather the opportunities for work (Galitzi, 1929, 66).

Andrica also considers it was remarkable how the Romanian immigrants that had been dedicated for generations to agriculture managed to adapt themselves to industrial life in America, with few of them farming or sheep herding in Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota (Andrica, 1977, 45). As newcomers, or greenhorns, the Romanians were at the bottom of the occupational scale, performing the heaviest jobs, which the older immigrants rejected, leaving it to the newly arrived. However, as they gained more experience and could master the English language, some of the Romanian

immigrants could be promoted and gain more desirable occupations (Galitzi, 1929, 72). They also earned more money than the workers in Europe, with salaries varying from branch to branch, but also between the American workers or the immigrants coming from Western and Northern Europe and those from Southern and Eastern Europe (Toma, 1998, 47). Yet, they accepted to work hard, eight to twelve hours a day in extremely harsh conditions, saving all they could, with one thing in mind: to earn as much as possible, as soon as possible, so they could return home to their families (Popovici, 1937, 222). The thought of returning to the homeland was the one that provided them with the energy to work hard, to endure all the difficulties. Yet, some of the immigrants were skilled artisans, some started their own shops and restaurants, while others have become steamship agents, providing assistance for the newcomers in finding jobs. There were very few doctors, more numerous lawyers, and some artists. It has to be mentioned though, that the younger generations, especially those brought up in the United States, tended to shift from unskilled to skilled occupations, as emphasis is put on education and training, according to Galitzi (Galitzi, 1929, 73-74, 76).

When it comes to the living conditions of the Romanians in the United States, it is necessary to specify that they have improved with time. If the first immigrants used to live in crowded households, boarding houses in which twenty to thirty people lived in three rooms, many times sleeping on the floor rolled in their blankets, in the 1920s, they continued to live in the vicinity of factories, but either in houses built for workers and their families, more comfortable, with a common bathroom and water supply, or in apartments and bungalows equipped with modern conveniences (Galitzi, 1929, 80-81). And yet, the more conservative Romanians prefer to live in not so comfortable conditions and to save money either for the future of their children or for old age. The change and improvement in their living conditions needs to be ascribed to the shift in the character of the migration, as it has turned into a permanent emigration after the First World War, the temporary settlements decreased in number, while families started to look for less crowded homes, with more space for each member. Other factors could be the better economic situation fuelled by the increasing wages, but also the facilities provided by certain factories, facilities such as cheap rentals for the workers, as well as supply stores and canteens that offered the workers lower prices than the average (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 158-159).

Furthermore, the established Romanian communities in America became points of attraction and refuge for the newcomers, allowing them to procure themselves jobs more easily, and to continue to live for a while in familiar surroundings. (Toma, 1998, 24, 26).

The homes of the Romanians that were turned into boarding houses became precursors of the organisations and societies these people started to found in order to help the newly arrived immigrants, but also to maintain the cohesion within their ethnic group. Hence, the immigrants that had brought their families with them many times lodged new immigrants for small fees, providing them with shelter and food, but also enabling them to find jobs in the factories and mines they were themselves working in. These homes became known as "borts" (from *board*, with Romanian spelling), whereas "salons" (from *saloons*) started to appear in their neighbourhoods (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 162-164), inviting the tired workers to drink their troubles away after a hard day's work.

Beneficial and Cultural Societies

In this analysis, the works of Christine Avghi Galitzi, Radu Toma, and Aurel Sasu have been particularly useful, as they provide a tremendous amount of information on the activity of the societies and organisations established by Romanians in the United States of America.

There is an important issue that needs to be addressed before discussing about the societies and organisations founded by the Romanians in America. Christine Avghi Galitzi mentions two important factors in the process of assimilation that all immigrants go through: the first factor is the original culture, namely the modes of thought and action, the common faith and language, but also the beliefs and customs the immigrants had brought to the United States. The other factor is the new culture, i.e. the new interests that the immigrants developed in their new environment, which strengthened the cohesion of the group and determined the newcomers to establish cultural and beneficial societies, or other organisations (Galitzi, 1929, 87-88). Moreover, Galitzi observes the tendency among Romanian immigrants to preserve the district allegiance, making them settle in the same neighbourhoods or cities as their fellow villagers, and the old home times have persisted in having a strong influence in the cohesion of the Romanian groups, determining the character of the Romanian colonies, which are

composed of people coming from the same region (Galitzi, 1929, 88). Due to the simultaneous effect of these two factors, the Romanian-Americans started after the First World War to organize their social and religious life, but also to adopt the freedom and ideals of their new country, which triggered the process of assimilation that would become irreversible for most of them (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 267).

Galitzi highlighted an interesting aspect, the numerical superiority of Transylvanians in America, which "must be borne in mind when seeking an explanation of their decided leadership in the Romanian social organizations in the United States." (Galitzi, 1929, 25). It can be thus observed that the Transylvanian experience with the local social and cultural organizations that enabled them to maintain their language and identity under a hostile regime was highly useful throughout their migration process. Toma underlines this fact by mentioning the existence of national cultural organisations in all Transylvanian towns and larger villages, organisations that helped the Romanian peasant to enter into contact with modern life and to expand his horizons. The first Romanian social assistance and cultural societies were founded in the United States about a decade after the arrival of the first waves of immigrants, around 1902-1906, because of the temporary character of the first emigration. As the number of immigrants was not so high at the beginning of the emigration, and their overt intention was to earn some money and return as soon as possible to the homeland, little room was left for the apparition of these organisations (Toma, 1998, 154-155). Moreover, their precarious situation as simple wage-earners did not allow them to contribute financially to support such organisations (Galitzi, 1929, 89). Drutzu and Popovici had also referred to the example provided by the American environment and by the immigrants of other nationalities, who got organized in different societies in order to preserve their ethnicity, which determined the Romanian immigrants to found their own organizations (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 187).

The instability of the population represented from the very beginning a challenge for the organisation of the Romanian-Americans' national life, to which the organization of the communities on regional criteria must be added, but also their precarious economic situation and their late emergence (Sasu, 2002, VI-VII). Hence, "Carpatina" was the first Romanian organisation established in the United States, on the 2nd of November 1902, in Cleveland, Ohio, and its members wore cockades with the Romanian flag

a few months after its establishment; on the same day, other Romanian immigrants, this time in Pennsylvania, Homestead, laid the foundations of "Vulturul". Their emergence was first of all due to the need for solidarity among the Romanians, since many of them went through difficulties because of accidents in the factories they were working in, which many times left them incapacitated for work, or, in case they were fatal, left their families resourceless (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 187-188; Galitzi, 90). As Toma observed, the names given to the organisations established by Romanians reflect their places of origin ("Transilvania", "Dacia Traiană", "Țara Oltului", "Bănățeana", "Bucovina"), their aspirations ("Unirea Română", "Unirea Română Ardeleană", "Patria română", "Tricolorul", "România liberă", etc.), or the names of the personalities that were important for the achievement of the Romanian dream of unification ("Horia, Cloșca și Crișan", "Iuliu Maniu", "Nicolae Iorga", "Vasile Lucaciu", "Cuza Vodă", "Avram Iancu", etc.) (Toma, 1998, 156-157). Furthermore, within four years, other fourteen organisations were founded, which encouraged their leaders to consolidate the societies. Hence, in 1906 The Union of all Romanian Societies in America was founded by 5 organisations, and the members decided to open all their meetings with the Romanian anthem *Deșteaptă-te române*, while in Transylvania the authorities had forbidden such manifestations (Galitzi, 1929, 92; Popovici, 1937, 222-223; Toma, 1998, 155).

It is important to highlight the role of these organisations in the fight for the emancipation of the Romanians in the provinces under Austro-Hungarian rule. Hence, the Romanian members of these societies fought to unify them, in order to particularly join their efforts for the Romanian emancipation by ensuring the connection of the entire community of immigrants with the official representatives of Romania in the United States, and these organisations managed to achieve this between 1917 and 1918 (Toma, 1998, 158). As Radu Toma mentions, the activity of the immigrants through these societies turned into a proper national movement abroad, with the purpose of freeing Transylvania from foreign rule and of unifying it with the Kingdom of Romania (Toma, 1998, 175). In addition, many of these organisations addressed the Romanian newspapers to publish their appeal for donations of books and hundreds of volumes were sent before the First World War across the Atlantic. Between the two world wars, the historian Nicolae Iorga had an important personal contribution to the Romanian communities in America, as he sent numerous books to the Romanian-Americans and published

regularly articles in the newspapers founded by Romanians in America. During the Second World War, the diplomatic representatives in US and the Romanian-American community collaborated to illustrate the situation of Romania for the Romanians in America (Toma, 1998, 175).

The role of these organisations has been synthetized by Galitzi, who considers that the main contribution of these societies to the life of the Romanian communities lies "chiefly in the part they played in developing the church, the parochial school and the press, which benefit all the Roumanian immigrants irrespective of whether or not they are members of the Union" (Galitzi, 1929, 93-94). Hence, the society "Friends of Roumania" was created, in September 1920, in New York, by taking the funds of 93,731.02 dollars of the former "Roumanian Relief Committee" that had functioned between 1917-1920. The organisation was founded by Romanian intellectuals, diplomats and businessmen in order to organize cultural events for the immigrant communities in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania, with the help of permanent lecturers, professors and students from Columbia University, Pittsburgh University and Mellon Research Institute. Most of the societies organised cultural events; one such example is a conference held by Nicolae Titulescu, the Romanian diplomat and minister, who spoke to the Romanian-Americans in 1926 at the invitation of "Carpatina", with such a large audience that hundreds of people could not find a seat in the hall (Sasu, 2002, 25). "Friends of Roumania" also offered Romanian books to many ethnic organisations in the mentioned states, as well as in other states. Three years later, in 1923, the "Union of the Romanian Societies in America", the first large union of societies which had been founded in 1906, had 23 member organisations, and bought the newspaper *America* from Cleveland for 11,500 dollars, and this newspaper became the official press medium of the group (Toma, 1998, 159, 197).

All in all, these societies reveal the collective will of the Romanian-Americans "to reinvent themselves under the imperative of moral, spiritual and national unity. And, last, but not least, under the imperative of sacrifice and solidarity with those remained at home"[17] (Sasu, 2003, V). Drutzu and Popovici highlight the fact that the Romanians did not receive any help, and all their

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[17] Own translation from Romanian: "de a se reinventa pe sine sub imperativul unităţii morale, spirituale şi de neam. Şi, nu în ultimul rând, sub acela de jertfă şi solidaritate cu cei rămaşi acasă" (Sasu, 2003, V)

accomplishments, the societies they established were the result of the hard work and sacrifice of simple and honest people that had a Romanian heart beating in their chests (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 207). Despite the conflicts that unavoidably emerged due to differences in opinion, or religion, or to the lack of support from the Romanian intellectuals in the United States, but also to the changes in the American legislation, the organisations established by the Romanians in their adoptive country provided support for the thousands of immigrants who needed financial aid, guidance in the web of the American lifestyle, but provided also the much longed for connection with the homeland, with their Romanian roots.

The Romanian Churches in America

Faith accompanies the immigrants and provides them with spiritual support when they go through difficult situations. Drutzu and Popovici begin their chapter dedicated to the church and school of the Romanians in America by stressing the comfort the immigrants found in faith and the importance of the church. The Romanians were of course used to hardships, but the immigration put additional pressure on them, particularly on the early immigrants, as they did not have the chance to find solace in a church on Sundays. Obviously, they asked for priests to be sent from the homeland to guide their communities in the United states, and soon invested many of their savings into building churches (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 208).

Christine Galitzi observes a striking aspect of the establishment of the church in the Romanian communities in the United States. Hence, the Orthodox churches of the Romanians, Transylvanians and Romanian-Macedonians in the United States were not the central point of interest around which the Romanian communities were built, on the contrary, they owe their existence to efforts of the members of beneficial and cultural organisations. If these societies were established in 1902, the Romanian colony in Cleveland called the first Orthodox priest to the United States only in 1906 (Galitzi, 1929, 94). The same opinion is shared by Josef Barton, who underlines the secondary role the clergy played in the formative years of the Romanian settlement in Cleveland, and how the Orthodox and Byzantine Rite Catholic priests participated mostly as editors of newspapers or interpreters of the religious aspects of immigrant associations (Barton, 1975, 76). Thus, the Romanian-American church and press were undoubtedly intrinsically connected.

However, the Romanian-Americans united their efforts and built the first parish in 1904, St. Mary's in Cleveland, while the first church, St. George's, was built in 1907 in Indiana Harbor, both Orthodox (Galitzi, 1929, 94). It must be mentioned, though, that the Orthodox Romanians from Canada built in 1901 the first Romanian Orthodox church in North America, and the archimandrite Evghenie Ungureanu, their first priest, came in 1903 (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 267). As Drutzu and Popovici point out, the Romanians in America, despite the fact they were free to choose from any of the priests in the country, they preferred to ask the Orthodox Bishop in Sibiu and the Greek-Catholic Bishop in Blaj to send priests for the Romanian communities (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 209). The first Greek-Catholic parish, St. Helena's, was inaugurated in 1905, in Cleveland.

Galitzi notices the late character of the Romanian Orthodox churches in comparison to the other organisations and ascribes this only in part to the difficulties of raising the necessary funds and mostly to the character of the church itself. She further adds that the church was not organized for missionary work and its hierarchy was limited to Romania's boundaries; it neither had the funds to support the religious and cultural traditions of the Romanian-Americans by sending priests to the United States (Galitzi, 1929, 95). Moreover, the shortcomings of the early church life among the Romanian communities in America are addressed by Drutzu and Popovici, who appreciate the more organized measures taken by the Greek Catholic Church, that sent trained missionaries who were less interested in their own gains and knew how to keep the cohesion of the believers. On the contrary, the Orthodox Church seemed to send from Sibiu untrained priests, and the newspaper America many times published complaints regarding those priests (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 210-211). In addition, another important cultural element is highlighted by Galitzi, namely the attitude of the priests, that had brought with them the prejudices from the homeland and were in dissonance with the spirit that predominated among the Romanian-Americans. Feeling intellectually superior, they had the tendency to monopolize the leadership of the community, while the parishioners did not want them to interfere with the administration of the community affairs, especially as they were the ones providing the salaries of the priests (Galitzi, 1929, 95-96). Gârdan and Eppel also admit there were tensions among clergy and laymen, but they bring forth the way the parishes were organized, on the Protestant model, which left the priest at the hand of the parishioners.

Obviously, this generated discontent among many of the priests and thus there was a constant lack of priests in the early life of those communities (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 268).

The first priest the Romanians had in the United States was Epaminonda Lucaciu, of Greek-Catholic faith, the son of Vasile Lucaciu, the well-known priest that had fought for the rights of the Transylvanian Romanians. His designation took place after consultations between the Romanian Greek-Catholic leaders and the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), as was the custom for ordaining priests that needed to do missionary work for the Catholic Church, which further attests the better training of the Greek-Catholic priests (Nistor, 2016, 115-116). At the end of 1905, the year he laid the foundation of the first church, Epaminonda Lucaciu founded the first Romanian newspaper, *Românul* ("The Romanian"), which published news from the homeland, but also articles about the beneficial societies and the American laws for workers (Nistor, 2016, 119). He then founded the Romanian parish in Aurora, Illinois, one in Trenton, near New York, Roebeling, New Jersey, and Dayton, Ohio (Nistor, 2016, 123). Furthermore, he founded an emigration house, Aurora, the gateway to America for all Romanians, which would provide them shelter upon arrival, but also guidance in their new life in America. In a letter to the bishop in Blaj, Lucaciu urges him to support the development of the Greek-Catholic church in America, stressing the large territory that needs to be taken into account, but also the difficulties that he had faced until then:

> I am speaking in earnest, Your Excellency! If you do not send Greek-Catholic priests for our people, we will have lost everything and my mission is purposeless, and it will be faulty at the most, as it is impossible to manage, to keep in order a parish as large as the Hungarian country! One has to be everywhere and then one is nowhere, and all the tiredness, as well as all my efforts are in vain.[18] (Nistor, 2016, 122, 126).

Soon after the arrival of Fr. Lucaciu, Fr. Moise Balea was sent by the Orthodox bishop in Sibiu. Moise Balea started his pioneer work and founded

[18] Own translation from Romanian: "Eu Vã spun sincer Excel. Domnule! De nu trimiteţi preoţi gr. catolici pentru poporenii noştri, am perdut tot, şi misiunea mea nu are nici un scop, cel mult are sã fie un blamaj, cãci e imposibil a administra, a ţine în ordine o parochie mare cât ţiara Ungureascã! Trebuie sã fii în toate pãrţile apoi nu eşti nicãieri, şi toatã oboseala, precum toatã munca mea este zadarnicã." (Nistor, 2016, 126)

several parishes, the first one, St. Mary's, in Cleveland, Ohio, then in South Sharon, Pennsylvania, in Youngstown, Ohio, and in Indiana Harbor, Indiana. A young graduate of "Andrei Şaguna" Theological Institute, Balea had a difficult task ahead, as he had to ensure the administration of the parishes, but also the religious needs of the parishioners (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 268). As the Greek-Catholics had their first newspaper founded by Epaminonda Lucaciu, Moise Balea could not stand aside and founded the first Romanian Orthodox newspaper, *America*, which first appeared in the 1st of September 1906 (Wertsman, 1975, 5), and was named "the organ of the Roumanians of the United States, and specially of the Greek Oriental Churches" (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 194; Galitzi, 1929, 107) and was supposed to be published "when I have time, good disposition and money"[19] (Wertsman, 1975, 5; Galitzi, 1929, 107). Drutzu and Popovici, and Galitzi, too, draw the attention upon the fact that the conflicts among the Romanian-Americans started from the differences between the two main religious groups, as there was a war of declarations and opinions between the two newspapers, lasting for several years (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 194; Galitzi, 1929, 107). Andrei Popovici states that this polemic began under the sign of the cross and ended when Epaminonda Lucaciu sold the newspaper *Românul* to a group of journalists (Popovici, 1937, 223).

Yet, the Orthodox Church sent more priests to America, and Moise Balea was joined by Trandafir Scorobeţ, Ioan Tatu, Simion Mihălţan, Ioan Podea and others, and each of them founded new parishes and churches (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 268). Gradually, the economic situation of the Romanians improved, despite the global conflict that started in 1914. Several new parishes were founded and the need for more priests became more acute. By 1918, there were thirty Orthodox parishes in Canada and the United States of America (Gârdan & Eppel, 2012, 269). Another important figure was Policarp Morușca, the first Orthodox missionary bishop who was appointed in 1935, after the foundation of the American Orthodox Episcopacy in 1929 (Opriș, 2006, 316). His activity was all the more necessary and relevant as the parishes needed serious organisation at the time for the benefit of the Romanian communities. After he arrived in the United States, Morușca visited all the Romanian settlements, even those from the farthest corners of North America, and succeeded in organising the parishes, in bringing the

[19] Original text in Romanian: "Apare când am timp, bani şi voie." (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 223).

young people closer to church, in setting things right and strengthening the Romanian Orthodox communities (Popovici, 1937, 227-228).

The Romanian Baptists also established churches in the United States. Wertsman mentioned that the first Baptist church was organized in 1910 in Cincinnati, Ohio, by Reverend R. C. Igrișan (Wertsman, 1975, 5). They established an association in 1913, and its purpose was to coordinate the activities of the congregation and to strengthen the solidarity of its members. The same year they started publishing the newspaper *Luminatorul* ("The Illuminator") in East Orange, New Jersey (Galitzi, 1929, 101; Wertsman, 1975, 6). Due to their enthusiasm, but also to funding from the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Romanian Baptists founded sixteen churches by 1929. Unlike the Orthodox or Greek-Catholics, the Baptists preferred to live apart from the other compatriots, in the same neighbourhoods, so their religious communion was enhanced by the daily interactions (Galitzi, 1929, 101-102).

Drutzu and Popovici estimate the Romanians had about twenty-four Orthodox churches, sixteen Greek-Catholic and six Baptist churches in America in 1926 (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 216). However, because of the mobility of the population and the fluctuation of the economic situation, their existence varies greatly. For the same year, based on the data from the US Census Bureau and from articles published in New York Times, Galitzi states that, at the end of 1926, there were thirty-four Romanian Orthodox churches, with 18 853 members, out of which thirty-two were in urban areas and had 18 436 members (Galitzi, 1929, 94). Even though their exact number cannot be known, the records reveal a period of growth for the religious life of the Romanians in America after the flow of those who returned to the homeland ceased and their economic situation in the new country improved significantly.

The Romanian-American Press

The Romanian-American press has been deeply connected to the churches of the immigrants. As mentioned above, the first Romanian newspapers in the United States have been founded by two priests that seized their importance in developing and maintaining the religious and ethnic cohesion of the Romanian-Americans. All scholars agree that the press was a central and unifying element in the lives of the Romanian communities in America

(Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 220; Galitzi, 1929, 107; Toma, 1998, 161). Hence, the press helped the Romanians keep their national consciousness alive and bring together the separate groups coming from different places, pertaining to different religions, who needed to feel they belonged to this ethnic group despite the large distances that kept them isolated (Toma, 1998, 161). As Aurel Sasu remarked, the press was, first of all, an exercise of language and faith, but also "a means of communicating, of fighting against oblivion, of cultivating the national memory in an admirable effort of collective survival"[20] (Sasu, *Presa*, 1993, 25). As soon as the newspapers began to be read by more and more Romanians, the press started to represent a connection within the immigrant group and with the fatherland.

Drutzu and Popovici begin their chapter dedicated to the Romanian-American press by highlighting its central role in the life of the immigrants, as it brought together people from all of the states, while also enhancing the activity of the beneficial societies and organisations. Moreover, they recollect how people would gather to read the newspaper, how husband and wife would stop whatever they were doing just to read the news from the homeland and from the other fellow immigrants in America, with some of them even learning to read at forty or fifty years of age only to decipher on their own the lines in the newspapers (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 220-221).

More than seventy newspapers were published by the Romanians in America between 1900 and 1975, proving that the press reflected and guided the development of the Romanian-American community (Toma, 1998, 161). Even though *Tribuna* ("The Tribune") was the first Romanian newspaper founded in 1903 in the United States, in Cleveland, Ohio, it had no continuity as it was had only three issues (Wertsman, 1975, 4). Nevertheless, the most important newspapers, *Românul* and *America*, both published in Cleveland, were successful and lasted for decades. As have mentioned above, *Românul* first appeared on 28 December 1905, founded and edited by Fr. Epaminonda Lucaciu as a gazette of the Greek-Catholic Romanians. In 1923, the newspaper *America* was bought by the societies "Liga & Ajutorul" for $ 3 500, while in 1928 *Românul* became a supplement of *America*, which had been published first on the 1st of September 1906, in the same city, at the

[20] Own translation from Romanian: "un mod de a comunica, de a lupta împotriva uitării, de a cultiva memoria națională într-un admirabil efort de supraviețuire colectivă." (Sasu, *Presa*, 1993, 25)

initiative of the Orthodox Fr. Moise Balea. *America* became the most important Romanian newspaper outside the Romanian borders due to its longevity, language, frequency, size, readers and geographic reach and all its editors fought for the preservation of their language and ethnic consciousness (Toma, 1998, 163). Yet, it is necessary to mention the long-lasting conflict between the two most representative newspapers, as *Românul* was considered the newspaper of the intellectuals, whereas *America* was the voice of the workers. The first aspired to become leader of the workers, but only succeeded in further deepening the differences between the two classes. Yet, despite the regrettable incidents and the antagonistic feelings, the press had a strong influence upon the construction of the group consciousness of the Romanian-Americans (Galitzi, 1929, 107-110). Other important newspapers were *Deșteaptă-te Române* („Awaken, Romanian”) and *Steaua Noastră* (“Our Star”), in New York, *Glasul Vremii* (“The Voice of the Time”), in Youngstown, Ohio, *Tribuna* (“The Tribune”), in Chicago, Illinois, *Sentinela* (“The Sentinel”), in Indianapolis, Indiana, and another with the same title in Detroit, Michigan (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 225).

The connection with the homeland was continuously nurtured through the publication of the Romanian-American newspapers, who informed the readers about the publishing activity in the fatherland, about the newspapers that had flourished after 1900, but the Romanian-American press also fought for the preservation of the Romanian language, identity and cultural heritage, showing solidarity with the Romanians who were fighting for the right to vote, and with the Transylvanian press before the First World War. Furthermore, these newspapers published details about the activity of the Romanian deputies in the Budapest Parliament, as well as their speeches, and they brought the case of the Romanians in Transylvania to the attention of Americans, organizing protest activities in Ohio. Their activity culminated with a memorandum sent to Franz Joseph I, the Austrian monarch, a plea for the defence and preservation of the Romanian language (Toma, 1998, 60-63).

The newspaper *America* had the most successful evolution. It was first published weekly, but it became a daily newspaper on the 4th of July 1917, gaining even more importance, and maintaining a constant collaboration with Romanian writers, poets, historians and scientists, by publishing texts written by Nicolae Iorga, Liviu Rebreanu, Lucian Blaga, Camil Petrescu, Ioan Lupaș, Elena Farago, Alexandru Phillipide, etc. (Toma, 1998, 165). Radu

Toma has undergone a complex analysis of the press, particularly of the newspaper *America*, and he mentions how the contents of the newspapers varied, as news from Transylvania which described the situation of the Romanians and the activity of their representatives in the Hungarian Diet occupied the first column. Another important section was dedicated to the relations between the fatherland and the United States, promoting economic exchanges, providing details about the diplomatic relations, while American news was second in importance in the early years of the publication. However, the process of assimilation can be perceived by analysing the evolution of the published texts, as more and more news focused on the North-American socio-economic, political and cultural environment, particularly on the issues of immigration, the immigration policy of the American government, the working conditions, the contribution of the immigrants to the development of the US. The English language and the political rights gained through citizenship, the preservation of the original onomastics, the working life, the political life, the external bilateral relations of America, portraits of Romanian-Americans also became prominent with time, while the activity of the Romanian communities, of the societies and organisations became central topics (Toma, 1998, 166-170).

There is but one conclusion that can be drawn from the activity of the Romanian-American press: it has been the central factor of cohesion within the Romanian community in America. Radu Toma draws an interesting analogy between the names of the two main publications, which appeared almost simultaneously, and the evolution of the Romanian immigrant group. The newspaper *Românul* ended its existence after two decades, which symbolizes the assimilating force of America, whereas *America*, written in Romanian, only recently ceased to be published, "revealing the survival strength of the Romanian ethnicity in an assimilating America[21] (Toma, 1998, 171). It can also be added that the press succeeded in accomplishing its mission of providing the scene for a fruitful exchange of ideas regarding the activity of the Romanian community in America, while it also represented a space of communion for the Romanians scattered all across the United States.

[21] Own translation from Romanian: "relevă forţa de supravieţuire a etnicităţii româneşti într-o Americă asimiliatoare" (Toma, 1998, 171).

Romanian Schools in America

The Romanian schools in the United States were parochial schools, they belonged to the churches. Their role was by no means to replace the American schools, but rather to provide a complementary teaching of religion and to help maintain the ethnic identity of the immigrants' children. Some of the priests realized that it was necessary to take action and to establish such schools in order to teach the Romanian-American children the language and faith of their parents. For obvious reasons, the Romanians supported these schools as they wanted their children to become familiar with the history and cultural traditions of their nation. Hence, many parochial schools were founded by the Romanian communities in the United States, namely in Erie, Saint Paul, Cleveland, Alliance, Indianapolis, Canton, Philadelphia, Indiana Harbor, Warren, Detroit, Homestead, and other towns. Many of the schools functioned during the summer holidays, only a few were open during the school year, and the graduation was a cherished event in the life of the communities, as the entire settlement participated, organizing festivities with staging of theatre plays and awards (Drutzu & Popovici, 1926, 218-219).

In her analysis of the Romanian-American communities, Christine Galitzi observes that, at the beginning, these schools were not necessarily successful, as many priests, who usually were the teachers in the parochial schools, were occupied with the ministerial duties and oftentimes overlooked the activity in the classroom. Moreover, they did not always succeed to engage the students and applied old-school methods of teaching, even corporal punishments, to children who were learning in American schools, accustomed to an entirely different pedagogy. Yet, with time and a careful choice of the leaders of the schools, the standards of teaching greatly improved (Galitzi, 1929, 102-103). We also learn that in 1929 there were more than sixteen parochial schools functioning by the Orthodox churches, twelve with the Baptist churches, and eight with the Greek Catholic churches, while the first Romanian-American parochial school was founded by the Greek-Catholics in 1911, in Scalp Level, Pennsylvania. Of these, the Greek-Catholic school in Detroit, Michigan, was the only one to carry out a full primary grade curriculum, both in English and Romanian. In addition, Galitzi mentions there were some independent schools established under private initiative, and all of them were working for the preservation of the language and cultural traditions of the Romanians who decided to settle in

the New World, determined to familiarize their American-born children with their origins.

In addition to supporting the Romanian-American schools, the immigrants supported the homeland education as well. Andrei Popovici underlines the substantial financial aid provided by the Romanian-Americans to the achievement of the national goals: building of schools, libraries or churches, supporting the activity of the Romanian army and Red Cross, supplying the Romanian population with medicines and clothes during the First World War, supporting the national propaganda for the recognition of the Unification of 1918, etc. It is impossible to estimate all the sums of money sent by them, but Popovici considers the amount to be of several million dollars that had been raised either through public collection or sent anonymously. Their support needs all the more appreciation as the Romanians in America earned their money by working hard, "in the hell that had sucked away their bodily strength, but had softened their hearts at the same time"[22] (Popovici, 1937, 223). Thus, beside the moral support given to the Romanians in Transylvania prior to the first world conflagration, the Romanian-Americans provided financial support to the ones they had left in the fatherland, showing their attachment to the Old country.

One of the most appreciated voices among the Romanians in Romania and those in America was Queen Marie, wife of Ferdinand I who became King of Romania in 1914. In 1926 she made a tour in America, visiting the Romanian communities that had prepared for the visit by organizing numerous events to her honour. Her words about the Romanian-Americans are entirely appreciative:

> While I was in America, it was of great content to learn that our Romanians that had come there were appreciated everywhere. I have visited them as many times I could, despite the fact that their settlements were scattered and, most of the times, small, rising indeed as lost among the immensity of the New World.[23] (Maria, Regină a României, 1935, 88)

[22] Own translation from Romanian: „în iadul fabricilor care au supt vlaga lor trupească, dar care, în acelaşi timp, le-a înmuiat şi inimile..." (Popovici, 1937, 223).
[23] Own translation from Romanian: "Pe când mă găseam în America, a fost pentru mine prilej de mare mulţumire sufletească să aud că Românii noştri veniţi acolo se bucură pretutindeni de o bună faimă. I-am cercetat de câte ori am putut, cu toate că aşezările lor erau împrăştiate

The assimilation process of the Romanians in America started when they realized they would no longer return to the homeland. Thus, they began to found societies, started to build their first parishes and churches, the first schools, founded the first newspapers. The church and the press were intertwined and came to support the numerous organisations that had been founded usually based on the regions of origin of their members, becoming essential cohesive factors in the lives of the Romanian-Americans. Luckily, they gradually adopted the democratic model of cooperation in their new country. As Galitzi observed, the regional or religious groups that had kept apart at the beginning of the emigration started to cooperate more and more, working for a united community of Romanians that would replace the old neighbourhoods of Transylvanians, Bukovinians, Orthodox or Greek Catholics, revealing how the integration of the Romanian immigrants has passed from village allegiance to ethnic group consciousness, the result of a cultural unity as Romanians (Galitzi, 1929, 116-117). Lastly, Barton's comparative analysis over the integration of three ethnic groups revealed that the Romanians present the classic rise of an immigrant group, as their willingness to adopt an urban small family life, as well as their attention to education enhanced a rapid gain of middle-class status (Barton, 1975, 172)

Preliminary Conclusions

There is a striking aspect that emerged when comparing the communities built by the Norwegians and Romanians in America. Norway and Transylvania were mostly rural in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, and Norwegians largely settled in rural areas in the United States and Canada. Romanians, however, settled prevailingly in urban areas, despite the fact that they were much better suited for rural environments. The possible explication is, though, the period of the emigration, as the Norwegian emigration occurred largely in the second half of the nineteenth century, when large plots of land were available for free or at very low prices, while at the beginning of the twentieth century urban industries were on the rise, offering better paid jobs, despite the difficulty of the work. Yet, this urban settlement needs to be correlated with the character of the Romanian migration, as, at least in its beginning, the migration was largely temporary. The Romanians intended to migrate for a short while, to

şi cele mai adesea mici, răsărind într'adevăr pierdute din urieşimea Lumii Noui." (Maria, Regină a României, 1935, 88).

work hard and earn as much as possible in order to pay their debts, buy their return tickets and return home to buy land or build a house. On the other hand, Norwegians had left from the early stages of the emigration with the intention to remain in America, looked from the very arrival for a piece of land they could cultivate and a suitable place for building a house, soon founded organisations and schools, revealing the perennial character of their movement.

Indeed, there are certain elements of their community building that carries similarities. The first would be network of relatives and acquaintances that helped the newcomers integrate. As the migration grew, boarding houses began to appear, providing shelter for the immigrants in transition to other places or for those that had not decided where to go. Moreover, the creation of beneficial societies that provided assistance from the arrival of the emigrants until they could find work and settle would be of positive consequence for both Norwegians and Romanians.

Another interesting aspect is that organisations and beneficial societies appeared in both communities before the official churches, despite the fact that both Norwegians and Romanians were highly religious at the moment the emigration took place. Thus, they saw the benefits in organizing their immigrant communities, in supporting each other as soon as the immigrants became aware of the importance of maintaining their group identity. In addition, the district from where they emigrated was often the starting point for the creation of organisations in America, as can be seen from the example of the Norwegian *bygdelag* or the Romanian societies such as “Transilvania”, “Bănățeana” and many others.

In both cases, the church did not act as the cohesion factor it was intended to, at least not in the first part of the emigration. None of the churches showed any interest in the immigrants that had crossed the Atlantic, forcing them to find alternatives for a fulfilled spiritual life in the early staged of the emigration. For a while, strife and disunion characterized both the Norwegian and the Romanian churches. Although the Norwegians were all Lutherans, the low-church and the high-church tendencies had different visions in what concerns the role of the church, and the conflict between the two generated confusion among the Norwegian believers. The Romanians, however, had their share of conflicts between the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches, even the Baptist church, until they realized it was for the

benefit of the immigrant community to cooperate. Yet, the immigrant lives eventually evolved around the parishes and churches built by the immigrants, providing for both nations a sense of cohesion.

The role of the churches can also be felt in the appearance of congregational schools and the press. Both the Norwegian Lutheran church and the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches of the Romanians established congregational schools which offered the immigrant children the possibility to learn the faith and the language of their parents. Hence, these schools functioned as pillars for the survival of the language, religion and the cultural heritage of the immigrants as they were slowly assimilated into the new society.

The Romanian-American press appeared due to the efforts of the two pioneer priests, Epaminonda Lucaciu and Moise Balea, who realized they needed newspapers in order to reach to all the Romanian immigrants. Their legacy would in time help the Romanians preserve their identity. Nevertheless, the Norwegian press in America was far older and more developed than the Romanian press. Hundreds of newspapers appeared throughout the consolidation of their ethnic group in America, many of them supported by the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Yet, both the Norwegian and the Romanian press in America revealed the assimilation process undergone by the immigrants, witnessing their difficulties, supporting their need for knowledge about the American society and cultural environment.

AMERICA LETTERS – UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND THEIR ROLE IN SHAPING THE MIGRATION

This subchapter is dedicated to the immigrant letters with the purpose of understanding the importance of the personal accounts provided by these letters, as they too shaped the migration due to the powerful influence they exerted upon the readers.

Nothing can match the excitement that must have been produced by a letter received from a son, daughter, brother, or father that had emigrated to the New World, as it was, first of all, a confirmation that he or she was alive. In addition, it contained precious lines describing the homesickness, the joy and

the sorrow, providing at the same time useful information about the sender's new life. Such a letter would be avidly read not only by the addressee, but by the entire community, and would travel from house to house, from parish to parish, as the immigrants often mentioned their neighbours or friends in the letters, addressing themselves to larger audiences and offered advice to those interested in emigration.

Immigrant letters have a great importance as primary sources in the study of migration and they provide personal perspectives that have sometimes been overlooked. Due to their personal character, they cannot be considered entirely objective, but they do offer a different kind of insight into emigration as a personal experience. These letters soon became "the source of wisdom about life in the new location" (Elliott, Gerber, Sinke, 2006, 2) as they were considered far more trustworthy and reliable than the booklets, or articles in the newspapers, or other brochures that wrote about emigration and the conditions in America. Through these letters, people could share their feelings and impressions about the new country, but also maintain the relationship with their family and friends (Krawatzek, Sasse, 2018, 1033). Moreover, their power of persuasion, when seen and touched and read and discussed by the rest of the family, cannot be neglected.

This subchapter is hence meant to discuss the importance of immigrant correspondence for the emigration to America, analysing its informative character, but mostly the personal experience of the migration as it emerges from these letters. A selection of both Norwegian and Romanian letters are analysed in order to see how the two groups of immigrants experienced immigration in the New World.

AMERIKABREV

The starting point of this analysis is Carlton Qualey's opinion that "America letters are the lifeblood of the emigration story" (Qualey 1965, 144). This graphic perspective is illustrative for the personal character of these immigrant letters, which, as already mentioned, deserves more attention for a better understanding of the emigration and its effects.

Ingrid Semmingsen mentions letter writing as a novel means of communication in the rural society of Norway, in the 1840s (Semmingsen, 1978, 166), while Orm Øverland stresses how this type of communication

generated by the mass migration from Norway to America stimulated literacy, as ordinary people, who were not familiar with the use of pen and paper, were turned into letter writers by the "radical ruptures of emigration" (Øverland, 1996, 19). Indeed, the majority of the emigrants were part of the lower classes, so it was a serious challenge to adapt to life in a new country, to learn to speak a new language, but also to keep contact with the family that had remained in the homeland. Thus, as letters were the only available form of communication across the Atlantic, the immigrants were faced with this new challenge, to learn to write in order to let those at home how they were adjusting to their new country.

The immigrant letters are known as 'America letters' in Scandinavia (Blegen, 1955, 4), and these letters, pieces of paper that carried the longing of thousands, became the most trusted source of information about America, as they described the New World in the words of the sons and husbands that had ventured westwards. Theodore C. Blegen was among the first historians who recognized the value of the immigrant correspondence, and his work, together with Solveig Zempel's or Orm Øverland's, highlighted the importance of these personal accounts of the migration. It is important to mention the fact that the Norwegian-Americans and their family in the homeland preserved these letters, and many of them were collected by historians, historical associations, museums and archives. The collection of America letters written by Norwegians is impressive, as thousands such letters have been gathered, translated and published.

Little was known about the New World by the ordinary people of Europe, if we consider the literacy rate of the time, the restricted access to books or maps, but the nineteenth century brought about a considerable increase in the emigration to America, stirring the curiosity and interest of a growing number of people who wanted to travel the world to improve their condition. Gradually, "the letters from across the sea were read with absorbed interest, often passed from one family to another in a widening circle, occasionally made available to newspapers of the neighbourhood, and invariably treasured." (Blegen 1955, 3). Furthermore, Blegen writes of a new discovery of America in the nineteenth century, which came as a consequence of the America letters sent by immigrants to their family and friends in the Old World. This was "a progressive and widening discovery that played an important role in the migration of millions of Europeans from their home countries to the United States." (Blegen 1955, 3). Thus, the letters united

people from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and fuelled the migration of millions from the Old to the New World.

These America letters are a sort of dairy on a grand scale, kept by the people who were aware that "emigration was a choice between two worlds" (Blegen 1955, 4), and illustrate, most of them in simple words, the challenges of the emigration, the change undergone by those who ventured to this new land of Canaan. Hope and high expectations permeate these sheets of old yellowed paper, but so do homesickness, and disillusionment, revealing the stark contrast between the ideal the immigrants had in mind and the reality they many times had to face. Nevertheless, the opportunities they found in the New World are widely pictured by most letter-writers, enticing the readers to embark themselves upon such a journey.

Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the essential role America letters have had in the mass migration from Scandinavia to America, considering both the themes they tackled, and the popularity they enjoyed among the family and friends of the migrants, which eventually expanded to whole villages or regions. They represented handbooks for those interested in migrating, as they provided useful information on the conditions found in the New World, but also about the problems the immigrants could face; as expected, upon their arrival in America, the immigrants began at the bottom of the ladder (Blegen 1955, 5), dealing with poverty, hard work, disease, all in a country and culture they were unfamiliar with. Moreover, America letters generated debates in the homelands of the immigrants, as they, naturally, compared the socio-economic conditions in America with those they had left behind. Migration began to appeal more and more to the Europeans, and these letters fuelled ardent discussions in favour, but also against the mirage of the New World.

The pioneers of letter writing greatly influenced those who were tempted to leave the homeland in search of a better life. One of the most prolific letter writers was Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland, who emigrated to America in 1831. His letters gained increasing attention, were copied and sent to other villages, enticing people to emigrate (Semmingsen, 1978, 17), particularly those in areas with favourable socio-economic conditions, or where the idea was already blossoming (Zempel, 1991, x). One of Hovland's letters from 1835 depicts America as a new Canaan, "a very beautiful and fertile country. Prosperity and contentment are to be seen almost everywhere one goes."

(Ellison, 1922, 73). Moreover, he praises the excellent order and the good laws of the country, as well as the wise authorities that govern the United States, but also the freedom that can be encountered there: "In America, one associates with good and kindly people. Everyone has the freedom to practice that teaching and religion which he himself favours. Nor are there any taxes to be paid here, except for the land one owns, and not even that tax is large." (Ellison, 1922, 73-74). This letter is typical for many of the early America letters, as it illustrates the emigration in a favourable tone, highlighting the economic conditions that were much better than in Norway, mentioning also the religious freedom, and the kindness of the American people,

Although not a typical immigrant, Barbro Ramseth, a Norwegian woman from Tynset, emigrated to Vernon County, Wisconsin, with her husband and five children in 1888, at the age of fifty. In the settlement they succeeded to form a tight community with other acquaintances and neighbours coming from the same town. Her first letter from America was sent to her father to reassure him that her leaving was the right choice to make:

> My often remembered dear old Father,
>
> I hope that these lines will find you in the best of health, and will let you know how we are faring. We are all in good health and like it here quite well, it is getting better and better all the time, so we must just hope that everything will eventually be fine. I often think of Tynset, and of you, then I long for home, but now, thank goodness, things are much better. I am fully convinced that it was best for us to come over here, for our experience shows that it is easier to earn money here, and fight our way through, but it is a painful process, many losses for a newcomer. (Zempel, 1991, 104).

The sender's concern for her parent is visible in the letter, which provides accounts of their health, of the fact that her situation is improving. However, she does mention the longing for home, but only to stress again the good decision she has made, despite the losses.

Many letters described the difficulties encountered on American soil. One such example is a letter written by Berta Serina Bjøravåg (married Kingestad), a Norwegian woman from Finnøy, who emigrated to Illinois in 1885. She is one of the letter writers analysed by Solveig Zempel, who also translated her letters into English. One of her letters she had sent to her sister

in Norway reveals some of the hardships she was dealing with, but it does not show signs of disillusionment regarding her decision to emigrate to America:

> As far as my own well-being is concerned, it is going better than I had expected. Naturally there are a few heavy moments now and then, that is true for all of us who have recently come over and no less for me. Yes, dear Anna, there are many trials for a poor greenhorn here in this country. When I left, I thought I knew how to work, but when I got here, I found that I didn't know the least bit, but of course I am not too old to learn. I don't have any especially hard work to carry out, it is just to keep going all day, and that is tiring enough in the long run, so I can truthfully say that I was seldom as tired when I went to bed in Norway as I am here, but I can only thank God that I have the health to be out working. It didn't look good when I first came over, but you know that it is hardest at first until you really get the hang of things. (Zempel, 1991, 29-30).

Unlike the previously discussed letter, this one reveals more of the trials faced by newcomers in America, as Berta Serina confesses that her working experience was not sufficient, that she had to learn new things and that the work is more tiresome than in the homeland. Nevertheless, the tone of the letter expresses confidence and hope.

As these letters show, the immigrants were ready to defend their decision to emigrate, providing arguments such as the freedom or the good economic conditions they found in America. Reassuring their family that they were well, the senders did suggest the longing for home or the efforts they had to put in adjusting to the New World. Teeming with personal observations, fears and expectations, America letters are valuable because of their personal character that comes to complete the wider picture of how the life of a Norwegian immigrant in America looked like.

If the initiative in highlighting the importance of immigrant letters in the study of migration belongs to Blegen, so does the conclusion:

> In the letters immigrants wrote home, they told, from its initial chapters, the story of a decision and its consequences. For most of them there was no going home again, and this they knew. They wrote about the land of their choice. They reported a changed and changing way of life that would shape the lives of their children. (Blegen 1955, 4).

Hence, America letters witness the choice of those who decided to cross the Atlantic in search of the American dream, revealing the changes the immigrants were going through, while showing a glimpse into their regrets, their need to belong and the homesickness they must have felt.

CARTE DIN AMERICA

The America letters written by the Romanian immigrants have been mostly preserved due to their publication in newspapers throughout the evolution of the emigration, and few survived in private collections, in the families of the emigrants. Some of the published letters will be discussed further on to highlight the personal experience of the Romanians in America.

The echo of the American dream reached the Romanians in Transylvania, too, although much later than the Norwegians. Yet, the image of a land where material wealth was achievable by anyone started to entice people to try their luck across the Atlantic Ocean. There was nothing more appealing to a society with such a precarious economic situation as news about the high wages of the workers or the cheap land, or the news about people that had escaped poverty after a short stay in America (Trif-Boia, 2013, 577).

Elena Trif-Boia has analysed the image America had among the Romanians in Transylvania and mentions that, besides the press, the guides and brochures about America, but also the leaflets of the transportation companies and emigration agencies, the letters sent home by immigrants and their visits in the fatherland had the strongest influence in the construction of this image (Trif-Boia, 2013, 577). These letters stressed the high standards of living in the New World and the possibilities of financial gains. Hence, some of the senders wrote about how the poor could soon dress like barons in a short period of time, about the development of the industry, about the millionaires, the elegant houses, the cars and the rich pastures in America (Trif-Boia, 2013, 577-578). In addition, the letters described the political and religious freedom that could be found there, which was highly enticing for the Romanians who could not freely express themselves in their country that was under foreign rule at the time. The immigrants could also notice, as their letters reveal, the importance of education in America, as it was greatly valued and supported by the authorities.

Considering the temporary character of the Romanian emigration, we have to bear in mind that many of the emigrants were separated from their family, from wife and children, and some of them never succeeded to return. The correspondence became, to them, the only means of staying connected to the loved ones. The letters sent to his wife by Petru Tămaş, an emigrant from Ilidia, were kept by his successors, and they reveal his contentment to learn good news about his family:

> Through this small letter I let you know that I received your letter and that I am glad it found me in good health. And I also pray the Good Lord above to help you too and that I hear good news from you. Dear beloved children, pappa sends you health wishes to [...] and to little Cătălina and your dear mother, who protects you from all evil."[24] (Tămaş, 1915).

However, as there were many opinions against the emigration, some of the authors of the time warned against the false image created by the America letters and photographs. One such example is provided by Ion Iosif Şchiopul, who, after a stay in America, wrote about the exaggerations in the accounts provided by the immigrants:

> Those who reach America take photographs of themselves, some out of pleasure, others out of revenge, dressed in fancy clothes, oftentimes next to a table or to a beer barrel, so that those at home can see the good life they have. They also send letters, in which they tell of all things that do not exist, and they exaggerate some things, which are otherwise true, to such an extent that they themselves no longer believe them. Their relatives and friends read the letters, see the photographs and, without much pondering, they haste themselves on the journey.[25] (Şchiopul, 1914, 17).

[24] Own translation from Romanian: "Prin această mică carte aduc la cunoştinţă că cartea ta am primit-o şi îmi pare bine că m-au aflat sănătos. Aşa dară şi eu rog pre bunul desus şi vouă să vă ajute şi să aud de bine de voi. Dragilor copilaş ai mei, tatii vă trimite adecă sănătate la ... şi la micuţa cărălina şi la draga vostră mamă, care vă îngrijeşte de toate năcazurile." (Tămaş, 1915).

[25] Own translation from Romanian: "Cei ajunşi în America se fotografiază, unii din plăcere, alţii din răsbunare, – îmbrăcaţi în haine frumoase, de cele mai multeori lângă o masă sau pe butoiul cu bere, ca să vază şi cei de acasă ce viaţă domnească duc ei. Trimit şi scrisori, în cari spun tot ce nu este, iar unele lucruri, adevărate de altminteri, le măresc într-atâta încât nici lor nu le vine să le mai creadă. Rudeniile şi vecinii cetesc scrisorile, văd fotografiile şi fără multă gândire îşi aruncă şi ei plugul în pod şi p-aci ţi-e drumul." (Şchiopul, 1914, 17).

Thus, Şchiopul criticizes the lack of earnestness of those who present a false image of their life in America, with malicious intent, but with a strong impact upon their neighbours and friends in the homeland.

Furthermore, many of the letters reflect the longing felt by the immigrants, the harsh life in the factories and mines, their solitude, the homesickness they felt. As the Romanian folklore is an essential element of the Romanian identity, the emigrants put their sorrow into verses, as this fragment from a letter sent by George Huludeţ to his wife in Lisaura, Bukovina, reveals: "Everybody's coming here / And the factories are full. / There are many factories, / Hundreds and thousands of tears. / They're all working day and night, / With death always by their side."[26] (Huludeţ, 1907). His letter that was published in *Ţara noastră* ("Our Country"), a periodical that appeared in Sibiu, reflects the toughness of the factory workers' life, typical for many Romanians who emigrated mostly to industrialized areas. Other immigrants regret their decision to emigrate and warn against the difficulties one might expect in states such as Montana, that are considered barren, hostile, offering few possibilities:

> The Romanians had better stop thinking about this barren state, where the highest occupation is shepherding. I have met many people who came here called by others, and after they spent the little money they had brought from home without being able to find employment, they returned home indebted and cursing the country and those that had lured them to come. [...] I, for myself, am content with my earnings, but I had to endure a life of tough slavery in this barren country, tougher than in a Hungarian prison. [...] Blessed are those who can live in the childhood home, even if they remain poor for the rest of their lives. Why leave the country of your forefathers chasing fortunes that you cannot earn? Or, even if you earn them, you spend the best years of your life in strife and bitterness, being left worn-down and completely drained. I ask my Romanian brethren not to be offended for my having written these things that I know and feel. I have been here for four years and I know the sorrow of my tough life, exhausted by the longing to see again my childhood home."[27] (Oprean, 1911).

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[26] Own translation from Romanian: "Aicea toată lumea vine, / Şi fabricele îs pline. / Fabricele-s foarte multe, / Lacrimile mii şi sute. / Muncesc toţi ziua şi noaptea, / Tot alăturea cu moartea." (Huludeţ, 1907).

[27] Own translation from Romanian: "Ar fi bine ca Românii noştri să nu-şi mai poarte gândul la statul acesta pustiu, unde ocupaţia cea mai de frunte e ciobănia. Am întâlnit mulţi inşi cari

Hence, Dumitru Oprean, who had emigrated to Montana from Poiana Sibiului, depicts the state in grey pictures, providing examples of men who had been lured to emigrate, but could not find employment and were forced to return to Transylvania full of debts. Moreover, he admits that his earnings satisfy him, but draws the attention to the high costs paid, mentioning the word 'slavery' to illustrate his struggle. His letter ends with the advice to remain in the homeland, as his experience in Montana has made him aware of the sorrows of a shepherd's life.

Still, there are immigrants that complain not about the financial difficulties in an immigrant's life, but refer to the question of identity. Nicolae Vasiliu, in a letter sent in 1922 from Gary, Indiana, to *Gazeta Transilvaniei* ("The Transylvania Gazette") in Brașov, writes about his disillusionment after the Unification of Transylvania with the Old Kingdom in Romania:

> As a result of this, we decided to remain here until things improve in Greater Romania. What hurts me most is that I would like to educate my children in Romanian as well, in order to make good Romanians of them, good members of the Romanian National Party. As here, in America, it is very difficult to educate them in Romanian, since there are no Romanian higher schools. Despite all the efforts we put into this, my wife and I, we barely succeed in teaching them the Romanian language. If only God helped us to improve the situation there, sooner or later, we would still come, we would still return to the Motherland.[28] (Vasiliu, 1922)

au venit chiemați de alții și, dupăce și-au cheltuit puținii bani aduși de acasă fără să-și poată găsi de lucru, s-au întors acasă cu datorii și blestemând țara și pe cei care i-au ademenit să vină. [...] Eu din parte-mi sunt mulțămit cu câștigul ce-l am, dar am avut să îndur o viață de robie grea în țara aceasta pustie, mai grea decât într-o pușcărie ungurească. [...] Fericiți sunt cei ce pot să trăiască la vatra părintească, chiar dacă ar rămânea viața întreagă săraci lipiți pământului. De ce să-ți părăsești țara străbună vânând averi pe cari nu le poți câștiga? Sau chiar de le câștigi, îți cheltuiești floarea vieții în trudă și amar și rămâi istovit și sleit de puteri. Îi rog pe frații mei Români să nu se supere că am scris lucrurile aceste așa cum le știu și le simțesc. De patru ani sunt aici și cunosc tot amarul vieții grele, muncit de dorul de a-mi revedea casa părintească." (Oprean, 1911).

[28] Own translation from Romanian: "Noi ne-am hotărât din această cauză să mai rămânem aici până se va face mai bine în România-mare. Tot ce mă doare mai mult, aș vrea să dau o educație copiilor mei și în limba română ca să-i pot face români buni, să devie buni membrii în Partidul național român. Că aicia, în America, e foarte greu de a-i învăța carte românească, nefiind școale superioare românești. Cu toată strădulința ce ne-o dăm, eu și soția mea, abia putem să-i învățăm a vorbi românește. De-ar da Dumnezeu să se facă mai bine și acolo mai curând sau mai târziu, tot am veni, tot ne-am reîntoarce în Patria mamă." (Vasiliu, 1922).

Dissatisfied with the situation in the country because of the attitude of the Romanian politicians in Bucharest, Vasiliu expresses his concern over the future of his children who do not have the chance to study in Romanian and sorrowfully announces his decision to remain in the United States until the conditions in the homeland will improve. His desire is to educate his children in Romanian, to make them good Romanian citizens actively involved in the politics of the country.

Whether full of dreams and expectations, or teeming with disappointment and sorrow, the immigrant letters written by the Romanians in America reflect their struggle to maintain their identity while adapting to a completely different cultural environment. The large differences in the conditions in the homeland and the country in which they sought financial achievement influenced their acculturation. Naturally, the letters provided the opportunity to maintain the connection with their family and friends, with the homeland they were longing for.

Preliminary Conclusions

America letters are important in the study of migration because they were the connection between the immigrants and those who remained in the homeland, but also because they played an important role in the evolution of the phenomenon. As Solveig Zempel observed, these letters had a personal significance as they made the separation from the family and friends easier to bear, providing the immigrants with the chance to share their thoughts and feelings with those left at home (Zempel, 1991, xi). More than that, the correspondence across the Atlantic offers insights into the personal stories of migration.

The letters of the Norwegian and the Romanian immigrants in America reveal a personal perspective that needs to be discussed in the wider context of migration studies. The larger ampleness of the emigration from Norway accounts for the multitude of letters that have been exchanged and preserved throughout the years. Yet, both Norwegians and Romanians described their American experience and expressed their attachment to the homeland in the letters sent to family and friends. It must be noted that the Norwegian letters tend to be more elaborate, suggesting better writing skills, but also the different lifestyles of the immigrants. Other reasons, more obvious, could be time and opportunity, for a housewife on the prairie was more likely to write a more elaborate letter to her parents in Norway than a Romanian worker in

a steel factory in Pennsylvania to write long letters to his wife in Transylvania. The living conditions could also explain the more bitter tone in most of the preserved letters sent by Romanians, but the desire of the press to highlight the negative opinions on emigration is also likely to explain the same bitter tone.

Even though these letters are subjective and emphasize either the positive or the negative aspects of the immigrant experience, they complete the perspective on migration rendered by historians or novelists. America letters allowed the immigrants to "tell their own stories in their own words" (Zempel, 1991, xiii), reflecting the personal character of the migration, expressing the hopes and expectations, the difficulties and disappointments, the homesickness and the longing for the homeland. Lastly, the immigrant letters are significant for the image of America that they transmitted to the people of the Old World (Blegen, 1955, 9).

CHAPTER 3
OLE EDVART RØLVAAG AND THE NORWEGIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AMERICA

This chapter[29] will provide a short biographical insight into Ole Edvart Rølvaag's authorship and it will analyse his contribution to the Norwegian-American immigrant literature by discussing in the first subchapter the image of the Norwegian pioneer in his novel *Giants in the Earth*, whereas the other subchapter will concentrate on Rølvaag's plea for the importance of preserving the immigrant identity as he presented it in the collection of essays *Concerning Our Heritage* (*Omkring Fædrearven*). In addition, his first published volume, *The Third Life of Per Smevik* (*Amerika-breve fra P.A. Smevik til hans far og bror i Norge*) will be approached to illustrate his attachment to his immigrant group, but also to the Norwegian cultural heritage. The English translations of the original texts in Norwegian have been used throughout the chapter[30] for a more reliable perception of Rølvaag's immigrant narratives. Lastly, but equally relevant is to stress the particular importance of his works as he focused on the inner struggles of the immigrants, on the difficulty of belonging to two worlds and, eventually, to none fully. His successful immigrant experience that emerges from the biographical data is relevant for his dedication to the preservation of the Norwegian-American heritage.

Our analysis starts from the premise that literature has a particular contribution to providing further understanding of the phenomenon of migration. If America letters are first-hand accounts of those who experienced immigration, migration literature is illustrative for the many perspectives left unexplained in the letters, such as belonging, alienation,

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[29] This chapter is based on the articles "Cultural Identity and the Immigrants' Sense of Belonging. *Giants in the Earth* and Beret's Angst in the New World", Mureșan, 2019, pp. 349-362, and "Seeking Refuge in the Past. Beret's Family Chest in O.E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*", Mureșan, 2020, pp. 161-170.

[30] References to *Concerning Our Heritage* will be made only to the translation in English as the original text in Norwegian was unreachable.

doubt, struggle, hardship, sorrow, hope. The letters mention many of these themes, but without allowing for a closer, in-depth look at the inner changes the immigrants were experiencing.

As the first chapter has highlighted, immigrant narratives reflect the life experiences of immigrants in America and are representative for the way in which they reveal the process of adapting to a new culture, as well as the immigrants' struggle to preserve their identity. Moreover, this type of literature can help reconstruct the past and shape the image of the emigration in addition to its primary aesthetic purpose. Migration literature also reflects the border crossings typical for America, movements from the old to the new, from roots to fluidity, from an existence bound to tradition that praises the group to a new way of living, that values individual choice, a discourse that "gives to America its drama of pain and tragedy, but also its magic and wonder." (Muthyala, 2005, 236).

A short overview of the existing literature on Rølvaag reveals the special interest of American critics, most of them of Norwegian or Scandinavian descent. The first Rølvaag biography was published in 1939 by Theodore Jorgenson and Nora O. Solum, who were his colleagues at St. Olaf College. Einar Haugen, another prominent Norwegian-American, also wrote about Rølvaag's life and work, while Paul Reigstad published in 1972 a comprehensive analysis of his life and art, that discussed his major narratives starting from the key events in his life. Of the Norwegian researchers, Gudrun Hovde Gvåle wrote about his hyphenated identity, that of Norwegian and American, whereas Ingeborg Kongslien discussed Rølvaag's contribution to Norwegian-American literature in connection with other major Scandinavian immigrant writers. Harold P. Simonson focused on the pioneer life as depicted by Rølvaag in his emigrant epic and Orm Øverland compiled a literary history of Norwegian America (1996) after having previously tackled Rølvaag's identity questions as a writer between two countries.

Ole Edvart Rølvaag embodies the immigrant who achieved success in America, accomplishing his American dream as he came to the New World as a fisherman and became an appreciated professor and writer, the voice of the Norwegians in America. Due to his attachment to his fatherland and to his ethnic group, he concentrated his entire creative force towards the preservation of the Norwegian cultural heritage and the future of the Norwegian immigrant in America (Haugen, 1933, 53). Throughout his life,

Rølvaag remained a close observer of the Norwegian-American community, becoming increasingly aware of their questions of belonging and identity, of their struggle to adapt without losing their cultural background. Moreover, he was preoccupied with keeping the Norwegian cultural heritage during the process of acculturation the immigrants were undergoing and felt that their contribution to the larger American society could be visible only through the preservation of their identity on their path of becoming American.

Ole Edvart Rølvaag's Life

Ole Edvart Pedersen was born on the 22nd of April, 1876 in a family of fishermen who lived in a small village on the island of Dønna, in Northern Norway, Nordland, not far from the Arctic Circle. The village took the name Rølvaag, a cove in the Northwest of Dønna, where the local fishermen kept their boats. He later took the very same name as proof of "a deep-seated love for home and attachment to the native soil" (Haugen, 1933, 53). Life in Northern Norway was harsh, as the fishermen found themselves at the mercy of the sea, the only means of subsistence in the area (Haugen, 1933, 53). But the magnificence of the sea would always influence him, acting as a spell, fuelling his sensitivity, imagination and fascination for story-telling, as he later acknowledged in *The Romance of a Life*, a projected autobiography on which he was working at the time of his death, which remained unpublished, quoted in the biography written by Theodore Jorgensen and Nora O. Solum eight years after he passed away:

> To me the land had little consequence, it might as well not have been there at all. On the sea we depended for sustenance as the farmer on his crops. The sea was kind and beneficent, treacherous and terrible, all depending on his mood. Upon the sea I lived, most of the time; about it my dream-life was woven; for the sea was at one and the same time the most vital reality and the unfathomable mystery. (Rølvaag, as cited by Jorgensen&Solum, 1939, 3).

Ole Edvart Rølvaag was one of the immigrants who found in America the suitable environment to achieve success, despite the difficulties he encountered. He left Norway in 1896 as a fisherman in Nordland, then he spent some years working on the prairie, on farms in South Dakota. His ambition to study took him to Augustana Academy, in Canton, South Dakota, and later, for his bachelor's studies, to St. Olaf College, in Northfield, Minnesota – these institutions had been founded by Scandinavian-

Americans – where he eventually became professor in 1906 after he also studied in Norway for a year at the University in Christiania (today's Oslo). Two years later, in 1908, he became American citizen and married Jennie Marie Berdahl. His dedication to the Norwegian cultural heritage and to the Norwegian-American community would mark his writing, as the journey of the Norwegian settlers in America and their struggle to become American while still preserving their cultural background and identity was the major theme throughout his career. Furthermore, Rølvaag's belief was that there is "no conflict between the cultivation of the Norwegian language in America and Americanization." (Øverland, 1979, 80), being convinced that Norwegians could contribute to the diverse American society by preserving their homeland cultural heritage.

Rølvaag wrote all his books in Norwegian, but considered himself an American writer, because America had made him a writer. As Øverland observed, he felt he was competing with the Norwegian writers as his cultural heritage was Norwegian, having little to say about American writers. However, he had the vantage point of an American, and he could understand the immigrant experience, which was American, as he had lived it himself, unlike those who had remained in the homeland (Øverland, 1979, 78). Nevertheless, he remained faithful to his language and culture, but chose to write about his American experience, depicting the inner and outer conflicts of the Norwegian-Americans on their path to adaptation, to self-discovery.

Rølvaag's first book is *Amerika-breve fra P.A. Smevik til hans far og bror i Norge* (published in 1912 under the pseudonym Paal Mørck and later translated by Ella Valborg Tweet and Solveig Zempel as *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971), a collection of imaginary letters written by Per Smevik, a character that seems to be Rølvaag himself, who sends letters from America to his father and brother in Norway in which he describes the New World with all its awe and bedazzlement. His choice for the epistolary mode is both natural and brilliant, because the "letter is the ur-genre of Norwegian-American literature" (Øverland, 1996, 348), offering him the chance to recreate the real-life narrative of America letters. His second book, *Paa glemte veie* (*On Forgotten Paths*) was published in 1914 under the same pseudonym, followed in 1920 by *To tullinger* (*Pure Gold*, 1930), revised as *Rent Gull*, 1932, which criticised the materialism in the immigrant community. *Lengselens baat* (*The Boat of Longing*, 1933) appeared in 1921, while his manifesto, *Omkring fædrearven* (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1971)

was published in 1922. In the meantime, Rølvaag had become head of the Norwegian Department at St. Olaf College in 1916 and later became the first secretary of the Norwegian-American Historical Association.

The appreciation of his homeland came almost twenty years after emigrating, when he published his novels *I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika* ("In Those Days. A Story about the Norwegian Immigrants in America", 1924) and *I de dage. Riket grundlægges* ("In Those Days. Founding the Kingdom", 1925) at one of the most important Norwegian publishing houses. Rølvaag eventually translated the novels into English together with Lincoln Colcord, and were published as one book, *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie*, in 1927. The novel is his most known book, gaining a well-deserved place among the best American immigrant narratives. *Peder Seier* (*Peder Victorious*) appeared in 1928, the English translation the next year, and *Den signede dag* (*Their Fathers' God*) was published both in Norwegian and English in 1931. These three novels form a trilogy that depicts the story of a Norwegian pioneer family in the Dakota Territory, focusing on the difficulties faced by the settlers in the wild prairie, on the land they are about to conquer, but also on how their new life affects their relationships and their sense of belonging.

Throughout his life in America, Rølvaag was preoccupied with the Norwegian-American experience, which he never stopped describing and enriching, focusing on the struggle of the immigrant to adapt to a totally new environment while constantly trying to preserve her og his cultural heritage. He was no longer a Norwegian, nor did he became American, but lived as a Norwegian-American, admitting that "we [immigrants] have become strangers; strangers to those we left and strangers to those we came to"[31] (*The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 126)[32]. However, Rølvaag's writings transcend the boundaries of his ethnicity due to the universal theme of the immigrant narrative: uprootedness, and, as Ingeborg Kongslien observed, "what is unique about Rølvaag's texts is their transnational and transcultural nature; Norwegian-American literature is, thus, the term that best defines them." (Kongslien, 2012, 177).

[31] Original text in Norwegian: "Vi er blitt fremmede. Fremmede til er vi for det folk vi forlot, og fremmede er vi til det folk vi kom til." (*Amerika-breve*, 1912, 171).
[32] Hereafter, all of Rølvaag's works will be cited by providing the title of the work, the year and pages.

Moreover, Rølvaag was inclined to concentrate on the losses suffered by the immigrants rather than on their gains provided by emigration. This perspective reconsiders the frontier myth of the American melting pot, as well as the idea of an American Eden. Thus, Rølvaag chooses to explore the dark side of these myths and, through Beret, the main female character in *Giants in the Earth*, he displays his profound thoughts and feelings over these delicate matters (Simonson, 1987, VIII).

PIONEER AND IMMIGRANT: MAKING THE PRAIRIE HOME

This subchapter will focus on the Norwegian pioneer on the Dakota prairie as depicted by Rølvaag in his novel *Giants in the Earth*, one of the most appreciated pieces of immigrant literature. Together with its sequels, *Peder Victorious* and *Their Fathers' God*, the action spans from 1873 to 1896, ending, probably by coincidence, as Kongslien remarks, in the year Rølvaag himself emigrated to America (Kongslien, 1989, 73).

The hyphenated identity, the dichotomy of belonging is central to Rølvaag's texts, as he was a writer between two continents, between two countries: he remained Norwegian due to his cultural background, but became American due to his choice to emigrate. Yet, this double perspective can be fully understood only by the immigrants, those that had followed the same path:

> Rølvaag lived in a Norwegian culture in that he felt himself in competition with and measured himself against Norwegian writers rather than American writers about whom he had very little to say. His vantage point, however, was that of an American. The immigrant experience was an American experience and could not possibly be understood by those who had remained in the old country. (Øverland, 1979, 78).

Thus, Rølvaag created the two protagonists of the novel as antagonistic models of adaptation: Per Hansa, an enthusiastic Norwegian fisherman, perceives the immigration in America and their pioneer experience in the prairie as a chance to build his own life away from the constraints of the Old World, whereas Beret Holm, his wife, clings to the past, to their traditions and Lutheran faith as she sinks into depression over her uprooting. Moreover, Rølvaag emphasized feelings and inner struggles, showing more

interest towards the emotional aspects of immigration rather than the material ones, revealing a darker image of the life experience of the immigrant (Kongslien, 1989, 110).

In an interview mentioned in the introduction of his first book, *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, Ole Edvart Rølvaag speaks of the need to belong, of the feelings of being lost in a totally unfamiliar environment which all immigrants experience:

> In that experience I learned the first lesson of the immigrant [...]. The first and perhaps the greatest lesson: A feeling of utter helplessness, as if life had betrayed me. It comes from the sense of being lost in a vast alien land. In this case it was largely physical, but I soon met the spiritual phase of the same thing. The sense of being lost in an alien culture. The sense of being thrust somewhere outside the charmed circle of life. If you couldn't conquer that feeling, if you couldn't break through the magic hedge of thorns, you were lost indeed. Many couldn't, and didn't – and many were lost thereby. ("Interview", 1971, xiv-xv).

A Saga of the Prairie completes the title of the novel that chronicles the story of a Norwegian pioneer family that founded a settlement in the Dakota Territory together with several other Norwegian families, friends and neighbours from the homeland. The stark contrast between the two main characters – Per Hansa, the Norwegian fisherman that resembles the fairy-tale hero that can achieve anything he sets his minds to due to his enthusiasm and determination to conquer the prairie, and his wife, Beret Holm, who cannot see the prairie as her new home and finds comfort in her faith in God, as well as in her Norwegian cultural heritage –, unmasks the tensions within the Norwegian-American community (Schultz, 1992, 91).

Per and Beret have contrasting views on their life in America, revealing they are built antagonistically (Mureșan, "Seeking Refuge in the Past. Beret's Family Chest in O.E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*", 2020, 164) in order to highlight the immigrant's inner conflict between the struggle to integrate in the adoptive country and the need to preserve the cultural elements that are at the basis of one's identity. Hence, Per Hansa is enthusiastic and energetic, focused on making the prairie their home, seizes all opportunities despite the challenges he encounters, an almost surreal man that is ambitious in conquering and taming the prairie. He is concentrated on the West, revealing

his interest in the future, his desire to create and achieve, making him "an American Adam." (Øverland, 1996, 359). Beret, on the contrary, feels overwhelmed with the vastness of the prairie, frightened by the influence the new environment has over her husband and the other settlers, constantly looking towards home and her past, her Lutheran faith and the traditions they inherited from their ancestors which she cherishes above everything else. Moreover, as Per Hansa thrives, overcoming the difficulties and accomplishing his goals, Beret is sinking deeper into loneliness and depression.

Their opposing reactions to pioneering and immigration reveal the chasm between the two main characters, as "they also embody the clash between the traditions of the old world and the freedom of the new, the clash between the temporal and the eternal in their past, their present, and their future" (Paulson, 1995, 201). Thus, the tension between them reflects the opposition and tension between the Old World, represented by Beret, and the New World, represented by Per, a tension that grows increasingly visible throughout the novel. There are, however, certain questions that arise from this opposition, namely how the tension is to be resolved and whether a choice needs to be made between the option of renouncing to the old culture and following blindly the new or the option of clinging to the values that make life meaningful while adapting to the new one. Is there "a choice if one extreme leads to madness and the other to death?" (Schultz, 1992, 94). None of these options seems entirely safe, though, but the ending of the novel coincides with the ending of Per Hansa's role in the settlement as he succumbs to the harshness of the prairie blizzard, whereas Beret survives and becomes a pillar of the settlement's community, "a reminder of the religious and moral values of the Old World" (Mureșan, 2019, 164). Thus, Rølvaag reveals that Beret is his inner voice, the one that warns against the costs of immigration through her psychological suffering, "the one in whom Rølvaag portrays the psychological anguish accompanying the immigrant experience. She is the one who suffers from being uprooted and alone in a new land. She is the one who knows the true cost of immigration" (Simonson 1987, VII).

Giants in the Earth starts with the image of the settlers' wagon trying to find their way in the vastness of the prairie. Per Hansa, his pregnant wife, Beret, and his two sons, Store-Hans and Ole, have been left behind because their wagon had been damaged on the voyage, and they now struggle to orientate themselves in the immensity of the place, to find the settlement and join the

others from the caravan. Per Hansa, although worried and realising they may be astray, too far from the others, doesn't give up hope and continues the journey, while his wife torments herself, sensing they may be lost. From the very beginning of the book, we realise how much their views on emigration differ. Per is the enthusiast, eager to start a new life, ready to face all the challenges, and Beret is full of worries and fears, interpreting every challenge as a bad omen, as a confirmation that they may have taken the wrong decision to settle in those wild environments. However, they manage to find the settlement and their fellow countrymen who had feared something bad may have had happened to them. This handful of people – Per Hansa and Beret, his life-time friend Hans Olsa and his wife Sörine, Syvert and Kjersti Tönseten, and two brothers, Henry and Sam Solum – are about to found the Spring Creek settlement. They are enthusiastic about their endeavour and suspect little of the difficulties they would have to go through.

The first part of the book, "The Land-Taking", continues with the settling of these Norwegians in the American prairie, of whom Per Hansa seems to be the almost mythical hero who succeeds in everything he sets his mind to, no matter how against the odds are. When inspecting his lot of the land, he discovers an old Indian burial site, but he doesn't feel discouraged and continues to put his plan into practice: he starts ploughing the land, then builds a sod house and a barn, in one building, although his friends doubt his choice is wise. Their seemingly peaceful life at the end of the world is disturbed by a caravan of Native Americans who camp nearby. Per Hansa shows once more he fears nothing and no one, and visits them, even helps a native with a wounded hand. After the patient heals, he shows his gratitude to Per by offering him a pony. All the others in the settlement watch with both reluctance and admiration how this episode unfolds itself, and how Per Hansa comes off with flying colours from another adventure. But Beret's fearful heart is constantly under torment as she sees how her husband grows more and more confident in the steps he had taken.

As the action unwinds, the settlers are put to another test. All of their cows disappear one night and they all get alarmed as it would be impossible for them to survive without their cows. But Per Hansa is the hero, again, and succeeds in finding the animals, and returns triumphant with the cattle, but also with some chickens and a bull.

There is, though, an instance which is determinant in the evolution of events. While inspecting his land, Per discovers some stakes that had been put there by Irish settlers that had arrived there before the Norwegian party. Without telling a word to Beret about this, he takes them, puts dirt in the holes, and burns them. Beret accidentally sees them and is horrified, as such a deed is inconceivable in her eyes, in the eyes of their parents and ancestors, in the eyes of the church, but, most of all, in the eyes of God. The Irish arrive soon afterwards and a conflict emerges as they all claim to have right upon the land. As the Irish hadn't registered their claims in Sioux Falls, the nearest town, they discover the land markers are gone, and the Norwegian settlers win the argument as the Irish are forced to move westwards. Per Hansa triumphantly exposes his deed to his neighbours, and, interestingly enough, they seem to approve of his actions as they all rejoice in their victory upon the Irish competition. There is one person in the settlement, however, who questions such ways of achieving something, who sees how people tend to forget all about rules when living in a distant place, far from the vigilant eye of their parents, of the community, of the church, and that person is Per Hansa's wife, Beret. She scolds them all like a priest would do, reminding them that sins are never left unpunished.

Per works hard, he cultivates potatoes and makes plans about how to make maximum use of the crops. The settlement is enlarged as Syvert Tönseten persuades a group of Norwegians who arrive in Spring Creek to stay. And as winter approaches, the men need to go to town to fetch supplies for the winter. While Beret's anguish grows, especially since she's alone in the wilderness, Per Hansa makes the most successful and ingenious purchases after he sells his rich crop of potatoes: net twine, which he uses to catch wild ducks in the swamps on their way. More than that, when spending a couple of nights at a widow's house, he is amazed at how beautiful the dark sod house looks after being whitewashed, so he whitewashes the sod house he built when returning home, impressing again all his friends and neighbours. The journey to town is yet another successful story for Per, who is depicted as being endowed with almost supernatural powers due to his inventiveness, courage and determination.

One of the most difficult challenges the Norwegian settlers have to go through is the first winter in Spring Creek. Although coming from the Northern lands of Europe, they are taken aback by the huge amounts of snow which forces them to stay indoors. Per Hansa's idea of building the sod house

in one building with the barn proves very inspired as the physical closeness of the animals provides extra warmth for his family. They are all, however, tested to the limit, and the Solum brothers start thinking about leaving the settlement. The group start discussing as a community and, in the end, think of a solution to involve Henry and Sam even more in the building of the settlement. Therefore, they appoint Henry as teacher for their children.

The first book ends with the birth of Peder Seier (translated as 'Victorious'), after Beret goes through a painful and difficult delivery which had been preceded by a rising anxiety and fear that she would die during childbirth. Despite the possibility of imminent death of both mother and child, Beret survives, and so does her son, due to the intervention of the neighbours Kjersti and Sörine, while Hans Olsa plays the role of the priest baptising the child. Peder Victorious becomes the symbol of the settlers' victory upon the harsh prairie, being born on Christmas day, reminding them all of God's mercy upon them, although their life in the wilderness had been far from the teachings of the Bible, as Beret thought.

The second book, "Founding the Kingdom", continues to describe the story of the Spring Creek settlers as they try to make the prairie their home. Life in the terrible winter is made more bearable by the birth of the first American-born member of the settlement, as well as by the activities at school, coordinated by Henry Solum. As more supplies need to be bought from town, the men leave again, despite the heavy snow and winds. Per Hansa joins the others with his oxen, but, when going through a strong blizzard, he gets lost from his friends, and barely survives the tough winds and the low temperatures. Eventually, he reaches, as by miracle, the house of their acquaintances in the area, where his neighbours had already lodged, believing him to be dead. Before returning home, they manage even to enjoy themselves at a dance, forgetting a little bit about the daily, permanent struggle to live in the prairie. Meanwhile, Beret gets more and more distant, feeling that her life there is a punishment for the sins of having had the first child before getting married, and of leaving her parents to cross the Atlantic with Per Hansa. She is frightened by the moral degradation she sees in her husband and in her neighbours, dreading there will be no hope for them when God's wrath shall reach them. The separation from the homeland, from family and friends, is deepened by the separation from the religious teachings, from the traditions inherited from their parents.

Beret's depression and anxiety are augmented by the settlers' idea of changing their names into American ones, to fit in better in their new country. She is the only one that doesn't embrace the idea, being appalled at their eagerness to leave behind their names, and, in a way, their identity. No longer bearing the names inherited by their parents, they seem to be savages in Beret's eyes, forgetting all about their past for this wretched land. Nonetheless, Per Hansa becomes Per Holm, and so does his wife, Mrs. Holm.

Per impatiently awaits for spring to come, and leaves to the Indian settlements with a new trade idea: to buy furs from the Indians and sell them to the Americans in Minnesota. His idea turns out to be highly successful as he manages to make a lot of profit from the very beginning. He would like to see Beret as enthusiastic as he is, but, instead, he can only watch her deepen in depression, becoming more and more absent-minded, less and less willing to take part in the very settling and adaptation of the family on the prairie.

Unable to temper his desire to seed his lands and benefit from his crops, Per Hansa is the first in the settlement to plant the land. Luckily, his lot is at a higher altitude and the sun melts down the snow on his land sooner than on the other lots, so he hurries to plant the soil. But the odds seem to be against him as winter gives its last breath with a last snow, and Per fears he might have been foolish in his eagerness to plant so early. But the odds change, and within a week from the seeding, he can see how the wheat has sprouted across his lands. Per Hansa wins again. He and his family are saved and, most likely, would have a generous crop in their first summer in the settlement.

However, not all settlers are equally successful on their way to finding their place in the prairie. A family of Norwegians arrives in Spring Creek and they are a dreary sight: a man approaches silently, while the woman is tied to the cart. It turns out that their youngest son had died several days before as they were making their way through the ruthless prairie. He had become sick and, after his death, they had nothing to bury him in other than the boy's clothes. The woman, named Kari, was, naturally, extremely affected by her loss, and could think of nothing else but that they had to go back after him and bury him properly. Her husband, Jakob, was forced to tie her to the cart lest she should run back for the boy. Per Hansa leaves together with Hans Olsa to find the grave of the boy and bring him to be buried as all Christians should be, but they return defeated by the vastness of the wilderness after they do not succeed in finding the grave. Beret is deeply impressed by their story. Her

sadness and depression deepen as she becomes more and more convinced that the place they had come to is full of wretchedness and evil. She even covers the windows in an attempt to keep the evil away from their home.

When hordes of locusts haunt the region, an event similar to the plagues of Egypt in the Bible, all the crops, except for Per's, are destroyed by the insects, and Beret becomes extremely frightened, convinced that God decided to punish the settlers for their sins and for forgetting about their faith. As she hides with her children in the family chest, Per realises how much she has changed, to what extent the fear and anxiety have gripped her and begins wondering what could be done to help her recover her spirits, to help her be herself again.

The settlers are now in the hands of God, as Beret always knew. A significant event occurs as God turns His face towards them and sends them a minister who would change their lives. One ordinary day in June, an old cart in a very wretched state appeared in the settlement and stopped in front of Syvert Tönseten's house. The horse was just as wretched as the cart, and the owner was a rather peculiar looking man, wearing a long coat and a greyish long beard. The hosts are amazed at his appearance, thinking he might be in search of land, but he tells them he is a minister and kindly asks permission to spend the night in their house. Both Syvert and Kjersti are overwhelmed by the presence of such a distinguished guest and do their best to please him, though with clumsiness due to the fact that a man of such quality was dining with them in their humble hut. The minister conversed with them, eager to learn as much as possible about their life in Spring Creek, but mostly about their religious life. The following day, the minister expressed his intention to hold a divine service for the settlers. He needed them all there, so only the largest house would do. It was Per Hansa's house. Kjersti told him about Beret's condition, and the minister decided to go to Per's house to ask them to let him hold the service there.

Per Hansa's house was too small for all the settlers who had come to take part in the service. The minister chose to preach them on the coming of the people of Israel to the Land of Canaan, drawing a parallel between the settlers' journey and that of God's people. After the service, the minister baptized the children who had been born in the settlement, when Beret drew all attention upon her as she hurried toward the minister when Peder Victorious's turn came, shouting that her boy cannot be given the name Victorious, in the place

where the evil gets everybody. She was taken away by Per, and, at the end of the sermon, the minister told them he would like to have supper with them. Before supper, Per Hansa confessed himself to the pastor, telling him about Beret's condition, about how she had never been at home in America, feeling somehow relieved after having shared his burden with someone else. The minister leaves the settlement, not without asking Beret and Per to let him hold the Communion service in their house in two weeks' time. On the planned Sunday, the service is held, the big chest Beret had inherited from her father serving as altar. The sermon chosen by the minister is *The Glory of the Lord*, and he preaches them about a Norwegian pioneer woman who arrives in New York with nine children, managing to keep them safe, near her with the help of a rope. The rope symbolizes both the motherly love, but also God's love for his children, assuring them He will always keep them safe with His love. The service has a strong impact on all those presents, making them think about the hardships of pioneer life, but also giving them a sense of community as they all sing the hymns. But there is someone for whom the presence of the minister had made all the difference: Beret. She seemed uplifted, healed, the dark thoughts began to fade, and she rediscovered the joys of motherhood. Per Hansa couldn't be happier.

The book ends with a final chapter which describes the harshness of life in the prairie. The great plain is said to drink the blood of men through endless hot days, fires, storms, all sorts of plagues which test the settlers' endurance. But the toughest of them all was the long cold stormy winter which came that year. During one of these storms, Hans Olsa wanted to save his herd of cattle, and take them to the shed, but the task proves extremely difficult, and Hans, overcome with tiredness after many hours in the blizzard, falls asleep leaning against the cows to keep himself warm, and wakes up later realizing he couldn't feel his legs. He eventually manages to get home, but is so severely ill that Sörine fears he may be living his last days, so she sends for Per Hansa, who is very eager to help and takes over the chores of his neighbour, while Beret goes to pay them a visit, and stay there for the night. Tönseten joins the Olsa family, but feels uneasy because of Beret, as he resents the exaggerate piety of the recovered woman. Beret, on the other hand, cannot understand his joyous attitude when she is perfectly convinced Hans Olsa is on his deathbed. She even persuades the sick man, who had intended to call for the doctor, that he had better call for the minister instead. As Hans Olsa has been convinced that he needed a minister before saying farewell to this world,

Beret talks to Per Hansa in an attempt to persuade him to fetch the minister. Per is annoyed by her proposal, telling her how reckless it is to leave the house on such bad weather. He continues his chores around the house, together with the boys, but constantly thinking about what Beret had asked him. Eventually, in anger, he decides to go fetch the minister, he prepares the skis and refuses to have a cup of coffee which Beret had prepared, as Permand (the boy, Peter) had told him. "Per Hansa stood motionless, watching him until he had passed from sight inside the house. Then, with a staff in either hand, he started off...Was that a face at the window that he saw?"[33] On the brink of leaving home, Per feels an irresistible call to stay more with his family, as if anticipating that this would be the last time he saw them:

> He did not look at the house again. In a moment he had passed the place where the boys were digging the tunnel; he longed to talk with them once more, but crushed the feeling down... He struck out westward. Something tugged and pulled at his heart, trying to make him turn back; it was as if he had a bridle on and the driver were pulling hard on one of the reins. He had to bend his head forward against this unseen force in order to hold his direction... "No – not now – not now..." he murmured, bitterly, wiping his mitten across his eyes.[34] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1927, 462).

The book ends abruptly with the episode in which some young boys from the settlement discover Per Hansa's body. It was a warm May, and the boys find on the west side of a haystack a thickly clad man, wearing mittens and skis, as if "waiting for better skiing". Symbolically, the Norwegian immigrant found his death in the prairie dressed as his ancestors, while "his eyes were set toward the west"[35] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1927, 465).

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[33] Original text in Norwegian: "Han Per Hansa ventet til gutten var indom døren, tok saa en stav i hver haand og gik. - Stod der ikke et ansigt i glaset?" (*I de dage. Riket grundlægges*, 1925, 203).

[34] Original text in Norwegian: "Han saa ikke mer op mot huset. – Han kom forbi der hvor guttene grov, hørte dem prate, vilde snakke til dem en gang til, men det blev ikke til noe, – han skjøv sig vestover. – Noe drog i ham, – det var som han hadde bissel paa, – en hang haardt i den ene tømmen. – Han maatte bøie hodet framover for at faa magt over ham, - «nei ikke no! – Ikke no!» mumlet han bittert og tørket øinene med votten." (*I de dage. Riket grundlægges*, 1925, 203).

[35] Original text in Norwegian: "Han stirret ende foran sig, bent vestover." (*I de dage. Riket grundlægges*, 1925, 206).

Uprootedness is certain in the case of immigrants and the novel *Giants in the Earth* proves that uprooting can have positive effects on certain immigrants, giving them impulses to achieve extraordinary things, as it happens with Per Hansa. However, it can also have negative influences, driving some of the immigrants on the verge to insanity, as it can be seen in Beret's situation. She feels the distance from family and friends, from God and the church determines her husband to steal the stakes that the Irish had already put on the land they decided to settle on, a sin that, in her opinion, could not be forgiven. Rølvaag envisioned her as the embodiment of the Old World traditions, revealing her solid attachment to the religion and faith of her ancestors.

Harold Simonson has correlated Beret's nostalgia and depression with her Norwegian background, arguing that Norwegians are prone to contemplation because of the cold and dark environment they deal with during the winter months. Hence, the prairie generated feelings of solitude and helplessness, as the Norwegian settlers were coming from mountainous areas and were forced to deal with the immense flat Dakota prairie, where no shelter could be found, as Beret felt (Simonson, 1983). Furthermore, Simonson claims they realised they could not return home, as their ties with the homeland and the Old World were broken: "the monotony of the prairie plus a deep nostalgia for the homeland stirred up psychological turmoil in many a melancholy pioneer, unbalancing the personality already inclined toward moroseness by the long dark Arctic winters." (Simonson, 1983). If Per Hansa embraces the challenges of the prairie, of the frontier, Beret feels weary with all their wandering, as if "she had lived many lives already, in each one of which she had done nothing but wander and wander, always straying farther way from the home that was dear to her"[36] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1929[37], 40). Per lives and dies, symbolically, with his face westwards, but Beret, who represents the antithesis of the American frontier, looks eastwards, to her homeland, to her family and to her cultural origins. As the frontier lacks governing landmarks, she appears unsuited for such a place, fragile and fearful; thus, when "people forsake the past, scoffing at the lessons

[36] Original text in Norwegian: "Det forekom henne at hun hadde levd mange liv. I hvert av dem hadde hun ikke gjort annet enn vimre og vandre, og alltid tenger bort fra sine." (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika,* 1924, 36).
[37] The first edition appeared in 1927, but I had access only to the edition reprinted in 1929. I will cite from now on the edition of 1929.

history teaches, Beret is afraid. The frontier is no place for such a person (Simonson, 1987, 6)."

The decision to move westwards and settle in the prairie has been difficult for Beret from the very beginning, as she doubts the wild prairie could become her home:

> ... Was this the place? ... *Here*! ... Could it be possible? ... She stole a glance at the others, at the half-completed hut, then turned to look more closely at the group standing around her; and suddenly it struck her that *here something was about to go wrong*... For several days she had sensed this same feeling; she could not seem to tear herself loose from the grip of it. ... A great lump kept coming up in her throat; she swallowed hard to keep it back, and forced herself to look calm. Surely, surely, she mustn't give way to her tears now, in the midst of all this joy...[38] (*Giants in the Earth,* 1929, 28-29).

Despite Per Hansa's enthusiasm for a new life in the Dakota prairie, which is shared by their friends with whom they establish the Norwegian settlement, Beret's view is completely different:

> In a certain sense, she had to admit to herself, it was lovely up here. The broad expanse stretching away endlessly in every direction, seemed almost like the ocean—especially now, when darkness was falling. It reminded her strongly of the sea, and yet it was very different. ... This formless prairie had no heart that beat, no waves that sang, no soul that could be touched ... or cared. ..."[39] (*Giants in the Earth,* 1929, 37-38).

The parallel between the sea and the prairie is often encountered in the novel stressing the seemingly similar environments that are extremely different in reality. Thus, Beret has the impression that the prairie is a place where life

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[38] Original text in Norwegian: "Var det her de skulde være? – Her! – Hun saa paa de andre, paa den halvfærdige gammen, paa menneskene, og det slog hende at her holdt noget galt paa at lage sig til; – men hun orket ikke si noget, – hun hadde hat samme synet med sig i flere dage nu, og formaadde allikevel ikke slippe det. – Hun svælget og svælget paa klumper i halsen, som vilde op, maatte lægge baand paa sig, – hun kunde da ikke gi sig til at graate midt opi al den store glæden rundt om hende!" (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika*, 1924, 26-27).

[39] Original text in Norwegian: "Her var vakkert og paa en maate, hun tilstod det. Dette som laa her og strakte sig til alle kanter, lignet meget paa havet, – især nu det mørknet. Det mindet saa sterkt, og var dog saa anderledes! – Det her hadde intet hjerte som slog, ingen bølger som smaasang, og intet sind som graat." (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika,* 1924, 34).

cannot exist, where the silence of the wilderness was difficult to bear: "if it had not been for the deep silence, which lay heavier here than in a church."[40] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1929, 38). Moreover, as she realises the rupture from the homeland, she feels as if she had been aggressively taken away from her homeland: "But it had been as if a resistless flood had torn them loose from their foundations and was carrying them helplessly along on its current – flinging them here and there, hurling them madly onward, with no known destination ahead. Farther and farther onward … always west. …"[41] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1929, 40). The English version has been modified, as the original text in Norwegian describes 'uendelighetens strøm', which translates as 'the flow of infinity', while the text refers to a 'resistless flood'. At the same time, the motive of the West is further enhanced in the English translation of the novel, by completing the Norwegian text "Det bar videre og videre." with the westward dimension that perhaps needed more emphasis: "Farther and farther onward … always west. …".

The need for a safe haven emanates from the novel, and Beret cannot seem to make the prairie home. Instead she considers it to be a godforsaken place. The more she thinks about the possibility of making a home in the prairie, a sense of guilt overtakes her when she realises she had severed the ties to her aging parents and to the familiar surroundings of the homeland (Paulson, 1995, 202). This guilt increases as she feels they have all been gripped by the evil, particularly her husband, whom she barely recognizes, and their blame is the distancing from the values and traditions of the fatherland, which can be visible even in their decision to Americanize their Norwegian names (Mureșan, 2019, 359). Thus, because of the contrasting views upon settling in the Dakota prairie, the gap between Beret and the other settlers, including her husband, grows deeper.

Beret distances herself from the others, who perceive her behaviour as strange, an indicator of a serious mental illness, making Beret an object of their pity because of their impossibility to understand her longing for the fatherland. Moreover, she believes the prairie has a seductive power over Per

[40] Original text in Norwegian: "vilde git fred var det ikke for stilheten, som her var mer umedgjørlig end i nogen kirke." (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika*, 1924, 34).

[41] Original text in Norwegian: "Men det var som uendelighetens strøm hadde revet dem løs og holdt paa at føre dem med sig – hvirvle og hvirvle dem avsted uten maal. – Det bar videre og videre." (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika*, 1924, 35-36).

Hansa, who dreams of material wealth and is no longer the honest, good and loving man she knew. His hardening will and ambition make him dream of accomplishing the "American dream of conquest and empire-building" (Paulson, 1995, 202). Beret however, fears the future and envisions God's punishment for her sins and for Per's pride, believing the destruction of their family is close. More than anything, she fears his ambitious deeds would eventually make him lose his soul (Paulson, 1995, 202).

Beret's alienation and depression increase as the settlement flourishes, and the culminating point occurs when a plague of locusts devastate the land, compared by the settlers with one of the Egyptian plagues mentioned in the Bible. Hence, when the harvest time comes, hordes of locusts ravage all their crops, except for Per Hansa's, because he had cultivated and harvested the land far earlier than the others in the settlement. As Beret sees the locusts invading the air, her anxiety comes to a climax, being convinced the locusts are a reminder of their sins, that God is punishing them for their fleeting faith, but also for having betrayed the old faith of their ancestors. A symbolic event follows when Beret seeks refuge in the family chest, that had been in her family for generations. Full of despair, she hides with the children in the chest in an attempt to escape from the evil that was surrounding them and Per discovers their hiding as "the scene closes with one of the mystical personifications of the prairie which Rølvaag drops into the narrative to underscore both Beret's sense of demonic power and the futility of human endeavour in the great wilderness." (Weber, 1992, 187). Feeling helpless when facing the evil, "Beret, who, locking her past inside a trunk, stood a stranger in the American wilderness, a place of crisis where light and dark held tryst and where the terror beyond the promontory filled the earth and sky." (Simonson, 1983).

The communion service that a Norwegian Lutheran priest held in Per and Beret's home would bring her peace, although the shades of Beret's angst would linger. She would also find comfort after Peder Victorius, their new born American son, whom their friends and neighbours had intended to take care of because of Beret's condition, would remain with her (Paulson, 1995, 207). Moreover, she finds her cure in "God's divine grace and Per Hansa's love" (Mureșan, 2019, 360), her restlessness is tempered and regathers her balance, but without losing the feeling that she didn't belong in the Dakota prairie.

The Immigrant Chest

There is one relevant element that needs to be discussed when it comes to Beret's strong ties with her cultural background, representative for many immigrants that crossed the Atlantic: the immigrant chest. Hence, the large wooden chest that was oftentimes carved with the name of the owner was taken on the voyage to store all the goods the immigrant needed. It represented more than a simple piece of luggage, as it was central in the immigrant experience (Mureșan, "Seeking…", 2020, 166). Some of the most valuable items the immigrant carried, such as documents, pictures, jewellery or the Bible, were safely deposited in the immigrant chest.

Rølvaag uses the chest as a symbol for Beret's attachment to the Old World, as a reminder of the importance of obeying to God's commands and of not forgetting one's roots. Beret's chest had been in her family for generations and served both practical and psychological purposes, as it was used for storage and for sitting in the sod house that Per Hansa built for them in the settlement, but also for preserving their valuables, of which the family Bible is essential. Moreover, the chest occupies an important role throughout the novel since Beret's distress arising from her longing for the homeland increases as the story unfolds. The chest inherited from her family becomes the "symbol of that longing for the security of her old community" (Schultz, 1992, 105) and is indicative of the deep roots her family had in Norway. Above all else, Beret holds consciously onto the past and has strong reactions to any change in the settlers' traditions and cultural heritage (Schultz, 1992, 105).

One of the first mentions of the immigrant chest occurs, symbolically, as the first Christmas in the settlement approaches, when Beret, pregnant and most anxious, in a moment of despair, becomes convinced of her imminent death as a punishment for the sin of having settled so far from her homeland. She immediately perceives the chest as the most suitable place for her eternal rest:

> If he could only spare her the big chest! … Beret fell to looking at it, and grew easier in her mind. … That chest had belonged to her great-grandfather, but it must have been in the family long before his day; on it she could make out only the words *"Anno 16— "*… the rest was completely worn away. Along the edges and running twice around the middle were heavy iron bands. … Beret would go about looking at the

> chest – would lift the lid and gaze down inside. ... Plenty of room in there, if they would only put something under her head and back! She felt as if she could sleep safely in that bed.[42] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1929, 230).

Kristoffer Paulson considers the chest, as well as the prairie and the sod house, to be enclosures, (Paulson, 1995, 202). The chest could be also perceived as a barricade that intervenes between Per Hansa and Beret, a "box within a box" that represents both the limits imposed by her attachment to the Old World and her refuge from the prairie (Quantic, 2003, 255). The contrast between the two main characters is again apparent, as Beret's reactions to the new environment, when she covers the windows to chase away evil and hides inside the chest to die (Schultz, 1992, 95), are in opposition to Per's optimism towards the opportunities they have, towards their future on the prairie.

An encounter with another Norwegian family that arrives in the settlement is another instance in which the importance of the immigrant chest is highlighted. The story of this family is one of utter sadness, as their son died while they were advancing westward in the prairie and they could only bury him in his clothes. As the mother was deeply affected by the loss of her son, she was constantly trying to go back in order to bury her child properly, forcing her husband to tie her to the cart to prevent her from running away. Per Hansa, despite his prevalent optimism, is also impressed by the sight:

> The sight that met his eyes sent chills running down his spine. Inside sat a woman on a pile of clothes, with her back against a large immigrant chest; around her wrists and leading to the handles of the chest a strong rope was tied; her face was drawn and unnatural. Per Hansa trembled so violently that he had to catch hold of the wagon

[42] Original text in Norwegian: "Men hvis han kunde undvære Storkisten! – Ho Beret saa paa kisten og blev glad. – Den kisten hadde tilhørt gammelmorfaren, men var nok endnu ældre. Der stod «Anno 16» —. Resten var aldeles utslitt. Paa kantene, og rundt hele kisten paa to steder var tykt jernbeslag. — Ho Beret blev længe gaaende og se paa kisten, hadde lokket oppe og saa nedi den. – Ingen sak at faa rum nok her hvis de bare la nok under ryggen og hodet! – Hun følte hun kunde sove saa trygt i den kisten." (*I de dage. Fortælling om norske nykommere i Amerika*, 1924, 222).

> box, but inwardly was swearing a steady stream. To him it looked as if the woman was crucified.[43] (*Giants in the Earth*, 1929, 316-317).

Thus, the immigrant chest becomes a symbol of crucifixion, the suffering of this family, leaving strong marks on Beret, whose conviction that the prairie is a place of evil only increases. Nevertheless, peace comes once the Norwegian Lutheran priest holds the service of communion in their sod house, and Beret's family chest serves as altar, functioning as a connection between the homeland and their new home in the prairie (Quantic, 2003, 255). The sermon leaves marks on all the settlers and gives them a sense of community, as the priest speaks to them with great power, whereas it offers Beret redemption, release from all sin, feeling her burden lifting from her soul when the priest places his hand on Beret. Stability and eagerness for life come with the healing of her spirit (Weber, 1992, 187), so Beret renounces her stark pessimism and realizes she needs to tend to her children and home, to enjoy motherhood.

Eventually, the family chest mediates the healing of Beret's spirit. Although she had thought of the chest as the most suitable coffin in her moments of despair, the chest "becomes the altar for the sacred ritual of communion and a symbol emphasizing both the structure and the theme of death and rebirth" (Paulson, 1995, 207). Moreover, the relevance of the chest for the novel is further enhanced by the fact that it is turned into the foundation of the settlers'church, who seem to have finally found their homeland in the prairie, despite the homesickness they felt. Thus, "this classic scene in American literature illustrates the appropriate use of the past in establishing the immigrants' present existential order" (Jin, 2008, 85). The family chest represents the link between the Old World and the New World, between the pioneers' forefathers and their children that would populate the wild prairie, between their Norwegian cultural heritage and the new life and traditions they would start in the New World.

[43] Original text in Norwegian: "Der var noe som slet i han Per Hansa; i to sprang stod han oppe paa vognstangen og saa ind. – Derinde sat en kvinde paa en bunke klær, med ryggen mot en stor emigrantkiste; begge hændene var bundet; der gik taug fra haandleddene og til hver av kistens banker. Det saa ut som kvinden var korsfæstet." (*I de dage. Riket grundlægges*, 1925, 65-66).

(Be)longing

Rølvaag also told the story of second-generation immigrants in the two sequels of *Giants in the Earth*, which attracted significantly less attention. In the second novel of his immigrant trilogy, *Peder Victorious*, he focuses on the boy who was born by Beret in the prairie when she was struggling with anxiety and depression. Peder is their only child born in America, and the novel follows him throughout his childhood and youth. Similar in structure to a *bildungsroman*, the book concentrates on Peder's development, while the point of view oscillates between his figure and that of his mother (Kongslien, 1989, 112-113).

The last book, *Their Fathers' God*, tackles Peder's adult life, illustrating the difficult process of acculturation, of adjusting to the new environment. The most important elements in the novel are the conflicts between the different groups in the new society and the challenges posed by the contact of the smaller immigrant group with the larger American society (Kongslien, 1989, 113). Torn between the need to be free from restraints and Beret's constant pressure to abide by the traditions and their Norwegian cultural heritage, with a Norwegian-American identity different from the one of his mother, Peder, despite his name that indicates victory, is destined to fail, while Beret becomes a pillar of the Norwegian-American community in the Dakota prairie.

Beret illustrates the fragile balance between the need to adapt to a new cultural environment and the desire to preserve the cultural background in the case of immigrants. Torn between two worlds, she symbolizes the costs of uprooting and alienation while she strives to hold on to the meaningful life in the homeland, unwilling to sacrifice these ties (Simonson, 1983). Unlike Per Hansa, the embodiment of the frontier pioneer that faces challenges with courage, will and character, Beret seems to be overwhelmed by the difficulties of life in the prairie. Nevertheless, she demonstrates "a sense of belonging to what gives life wholeness and consecration" (Simonson, 1983), revealing her superior understanding of wholeness in the way Beret relates to her husband, her children and the other settlers, but mostly to her parents in Norway, the absent, yet ever present characters of *Giants in the Earth*.

Rølvaag chose Beret as his voice in his attempt to highlight the importance of the Norwegian-Americans' cultural heritage. Unable to find peace because

of having left her elderly parents alone in the fatherland, finding herself in a foreign environment, full of uncertainties, Beret finds refuge in the objects that she had inherited from her family, her family chest, her Bible, but mostly in her faith in God, and the service of communion performed by a Norwegian Lutheran priest eventually frees her from her anxiety. Rølvaag's belief that the immigrants' cultural heritage is an essential part of their identity is illustrated throughout the novel through Beret's attitude towards the adjustment to a new life, revealing her sense of loss that the new country could never give her (Øverland, 1979, 84). However, Simonson underlines that his greatest theme is not doom, but rather the strength emerging from maintaining the connection with voices of the past that are brought to the present in essential continuity. His conclusion is that "One will search American literature in vain for a portrait more sustained and textured in this theme than Rølvaag's Beret" (Simonson, 1987, 8).

Another perspective is worth mentioning, namely the didactic character of Rølvaag's trilogy, as his distinct ideas and attitudes regarding the Norwegian-American cultural environment are reflected in the attitude of the narrator, leading the development of the plot and the choice of the authentic material. The fight to preserve the Norwegian cultural heritage in America, namely the language, religion, traditions and culture, is central in the novels. Moreover, Rølvaag, the teacher, draws the attention to the fact that a people that denies the cultural heritage is soulless and prone to materialism (Kongslien, 1989, 110-111).

THE PRESERVATION OF THE HOMELAND CULTURE

The central theme of Rølvaag's authorship – the preservation of the cultural heritage inherited from the homeland – is prevalent in *Giants in the Earth*, and his other writings alternate between reflections and redefinitions of the way the Norwegians perceived themselves. Furthermore, his intention is to make the sons and daughters of the Norwegian immigrants aware of the respect they need to show to their parents and to their history, revealing Rølvaag's hope that Norwegians would have their part in creating a new American ethnicity by maintaining at the same time a positive perception of their Norwegian cultural heritage (Haugtvedt, 2008, 149). His commitment to the American culture is underlined by Paul Reigstad as well, when he stresses how Rølvaag could not envision that Norwegians should exist in

isolation from the other Americans, but he encouraged them to maintain the specificity of their culture as they absorbed the values of the American culture (Reigstad, 1972, 41-42).

It is impossible to draw a distinction between Rølvaag's literary work and his historical interest, Kenneth Bjørk argues, as many of his efforts were directed towards the cultural enrichment of American life, particularly through his participation in the Norwegian-American Historical Association (Bjørk, 1940, 114), an association that is still working for the preservation of the Norwegian-American historical heritage. Rølvaag, as other Norwegian-American intellectuals, was interested in the cultural situation of the immigrants, and, in 1918, he founded the society "For the Ancestral Heritage" to counterbalance the attack on foreign ethnicity and hyphenated Americans generated by the First World War (Semmingsen, 1978, 142). The situation of the immigrants was aggravated by their sense of rootlessness, as they did not feel they fully belonged to any of the countries, while their children grew as part of the American society, with which they could identify themselves. Thus, the Norwegian-American writers felt they were Americans by being loyal to the country, but they also thought they could not deny their origins or cultural background, and that they needed to preserve the language and culture of their fathers (Semmingsen, 1978, 143). Perhaps not all immigrants had the same strong perception of this conflict between belonging to two different worlds, but Rølvaag highlighted its importance, enabling them to feel some attachment to these ideas that reminded them of their beginnings.

There were difficult moments at the outset of Rølvaag's American experience, as it was the case with most immigrants: solitude, fear of the unknown, the need to belong, all reflect the costs paid by immigrants as they became estranged from the fatherland. As for their need to feel at home and accepted in their new country, doubts were constant, revealing their inner struggle to adapt without losing their cultural background. Moreover, despite material betterment, Rølvaag feels a void that most likely stems from alienation:

> Sometimes I doubt that I can ever become an American; I've written about this before. The last few weeks I've had another period of doubt, and this time the attack has been worse than any time before. Every once in a while these spells come over me. What is the matter? I wish I knew. I have health and strength, a good appetite, and plenty to eat.

> Back home in Smeviken we would call that being well-off.[44] (*The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 83-84).

Omkring Fædrearven is Rølvaag's fourth book, written in Norwegian and published in 1922, while his granddaughter, Solveig Zempel, translated and published it as *Concerning Our Heritage* in 1998. Einar Haugen considers the book to be "the fervent and occasionally brilliant exposition of his views on this subject" (Haugen, 1933, 56), reflecting his conviction that the Norwegians could make a definite contribution to the America society solely by preserving their cultural identity. Moreover, Haugen mentions, Rølvaag felt they were too eager to renounce their traditions and urged them to keep alive their knowledge of Norwegian language and culture (Haugen, 1933, 56). Stressing the important role played by his fellow Norwegians in their new homeland, he writes about how they have been blessed among all peoples, and how the innate traits they possess have helped them achieve an important status.

It is relevant for the analysis of this book to refer to Rølvaag's education, as the romantic nationalism that was blooming in Norway during the nineteenth century deeply influenced him. This is all the more necessary to bear in mind if we consider how the emigration experience must have created a less gleeful image of the homeland due to the distance and the tendency to romanticize the past. In addition, he taught at St. Olaf College a course on immigration history, which provided the perfect opportunity to present his ideas and beliefs on national identity and the preservation of the Norwegian culture and heritage to his students. This can be understood from the fact that the first section of the book is based on the lecture notes for this course (Zempel, 1998, 7).

Concerning Our Heritage can be considered a testament Rølvaag left to the Norwegian immigrants in America due to its tone and the way he addresses those with whom he shared the same migration experience, but also because it illustrates his beliefs about how important their cultural background is in their new life in a new country, but also his advice for preserving their

[44] Original text in Norwegian: "Somme tider tviler jeg paa at jeg kan bli amerikaner, – har vist nævnt det før ogsaa. I de sidste uker har jeg hat en av disse tvileriderne igjen, og denne gang har anfaldet været litt værre end nogensinde. Ret som det er, kommer disse raptuserne over mig. Hvad er det da som staar paa? Nei om jeg det vet! Jeg har liv og helse, fuldt op av god mat og en endda bedre appetit, og slik pleiet vi hjemme i Smeviken at kalde velstand." (*Amerika-breve fra P.A. Smevik til hans far og bror i Norge*, 1912, 119).

traditions. Despite certain ideas that have been perceived as exaggerated by some critics, his effort to preserve the Norwegian identity among Norwegian-Americans definitely deserves appraisal. More than that, he admitted from the beginning of his American voyage that the Norwegian immigrants, from the very minute they put foot on Western soil, were no longer Norwegians, but part of the larger American group. Their identity was unique, as they encompassed both the Nordic heritage and the American element. These people belonged to two worlds, and to none fully, and Rølvaag spoke for them as a writer between two countries (Øverland, 1979, 77).

Rølvaag associated the Norwegian ethnicity with a familiar view of the world and privileged the "Norwegian ethnic identity over other formulations of individuality." (Haugtvedt, 2008, 147). He also associated the Norwegian ethnic group with his own concept of self, promoting a positive image of his ethnicity in order to encourage the Norwegian-American immigrant children to be open and embrace their Old World origins instead of being ashamed of them. Moreover, he believed "ethnicity is passed down to children through their parents, and the wisdom of parents is invaluable" (Haugtvedt, 2008, 156), so the second-generation immigrants needed to appreciate the cultural background inherited from their parents, particularly as they were American due to their parents' decision to emigrate.

When Rølvaag spoke of his 'people' (*vårt folk*), or his 'kin' (*vår ætt*), Haugen argues, he referred to the Norwegian ethnic group in America, whereas its 'ancestral heritage' (*fædrearven*), was its Norwegian 'ethnicity'. Furthermore, he considered "the preservation of that ethnicity as intact as possible and its infusion into the developing American culture was an ethical duty laid down by divine fiat in every ethnic group." (Haugen, 1983, 23). Hence, his vision is that every ethnic group in America needs to cling to its cultural heritage in order to become integrated into the wider American group with their distinctive features that can only enrich the American culture. For him, his Norwegian identity was an anchor that provided stability in a confusing environment, and he associated his ethnic group with moral values that he considered necessary, but could only acknowledge they were constantly decaying (Haugtvedt, 2008, 157-158) during the process of assimilation the immigrants were experiencing.

Like many other ethnic groups in America, the Norwegians, through historians and writers, among whom Rølvaag occupies a central place, tried

to make America their home by creating ‘homemaking myths’ (Øverland, 2000, 8), which aimed at demonstrating that a certain ethnic group could not be considered foreign due to their rights to belong to America. Thus, since Rølvaag himself had been considered a foreigner, his intention was to convince Norwegian-Americans that they had a right to their American homeland by making reference to ideological reasons, namely that Norwegians were the source of American democracy, and to racial reasons that stemmed from the Viking settlements in England and Normandy which proved their close relationship to Americans of English descent (Øverland, 2000, 5). *Concerning Our Heritage* is opened by Rølvaag’s description of the restless soul of the Norwegians: “Our people are a restless folk. They are strongly rooted, and yet they are restless. Their spirit ranges far and wide. The call of the unknown and the lure of adventure are stronger in our kin than they are in most other peoples.” (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 41).

The book focuses firstly on the traits that distinguish the Norwegians from other ethnic groups in America, praising their spirit of adventure, their relationship to nature and their respect for the law. After glorifying the features nature has bestowed upon his people by referring to Norwegian folklore myths of fearless heroes, Rølvaag highlights another characteristic that he considers specific for the Norwegians, namely their love for nature: “*An idealistic view of nature has always characterized the Norwegian people*.” (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 56). He considers it to be a part of their heritage, as the folklore, which is invoked again, reveals their innate appetite for adventurous trips on the mountains even under the harshest weather conditions.

Moreover, Rølvaag believes their profound connection to nature has determined the course of their settlement in the New World. Hence, the Norwegians emigrated to America with the intention to buy as much land as possible – especially if we consider the limited amount of land that could be used for agriculture in the fatherland because of its geography –, so it was only natural that they decided to settle in rural areas, as they “could not remain in the large city living from hand to mouth as an industrial worker.” (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 59). To them, Rølvaag writes, it was important to have real homes, not mere houses, spaces that represented the safe havens where they could take refuge in.

Throughout the book, Rølvaag acts as the teacher that guides his students, but also as a leader that criticizes the wrong paths chosen by his fellow Norwegian-Americans. The decision of newer immigrants to settle in cities, or that of older immigrants to leave their rural homes for the sake of comfort makes him believe their immigrant community has not succeeded in striking roots:

> This migration into town by a large portion of our older farming population in order to take it easy – we ought to note that this is the goal of the majority! – is the saddest aspect of our rootlessness. It shows so clearly that we have not yet succeeded in setting roots and building true homes. No, not homes. This is unspeakably sad. (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 61).

Instead of concentrating their efforts for achieving material success or for living easy, comfortable lives, Rølvaag suggests the Norwegian-Americans should preserve the farms they have built in the Midwest, their homes that abound in Norwegian cultural elements, adorned with rosemåling[45], traces of their roots in the fjords of Northern Europe.

In his desire to strike the audience with the unequalled traits of his ethnic group, Rølvaag resorts to exaggerations, and one of them refers to the democratic backbone of the Norwegian rural culture: "*the democratic-aristocratic feeling that permeates the best of Norway's rural populace*." (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 63). Thus, invoking the saga times, he claims the great clan of Norwegian farmers showed something that could not be found anywhere else in the world history: the fact that they were aristocrats and democrats at the same time. Furthermore, their obedience to the law and the respect they show for the law of the land is another characteristic trait of the Norwegians that Rølvaag believes is closely connected with their love for kin and home (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 70).

The relationship between children and parents is central for the preservation of the cultural heritage. Rølvaag admits with a sad tone that the Norwegian-American children have distanced themselves from their parents: "Here mother and father are mere foreigners." (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 72). As the Americanization process was developing, the Norwegian identity

[45] Norwegian decorative painting on wood, with flowers as ornaments.

was fading away. The immigrants' children were born in an English-speaking environment, the American culture was more familiar to them than the Norwegian culture of their mother and father, so they no longer felt their fathers' history could help them better understand the American history or culture. On the contrary, out of the need to integrate, to be considered American instead of Norwegian, they chose, as Peder Victorious, to sacrifice their Norwegian identity. Rølvaag then continues with a plea for the study of languages, particularly of Norwegian, the language of their kin, which should, in his view, possess even greater value particularly because it is visceral in their being, a defining element of their identity and that of their ancestors (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 91). He also encourages the members of his ethnic group to teach their children their language, to tell them Norwegian folk tales, to familiarize them with all the elements that are essential for their ethnicity, while also sharing with them the difficulties of the immigrant life. The hard work, the privation of the pioneers, their innumerable struggles and victories, Rølvaag argues, need to be known by the immigrants' descendants, as "such tales will make the children conscious that we too have helped to build America." (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 98).

Another important element of the Norwegian identity is religion, and Rølvaag argues that "we *as a people are strongly inclined toward religion*." (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 116). Rølvaag's belief in Beret symbolizes that faith in God is central and it provides the sole comfort throughout all the struggles of the immigrant experience. The inclination towards religion offers additional reassurance that his ethnic group is a group that values morals, enhancing their integration in the wider American culture.

Rølvaag's concluding words entice the readers with the benefits of preserving their cultural heritage. He believes the acknowledgement of their heritage acquired through ancestry could be beneficial and could strengthen their sense of unity:

> We Americans of Norwegian descent have a common root and a common heritage which we have acquired through our ancestry. What if we could get people to see this? Would that not strengthen our sense of unity? [...] We are Americans, and as citizens nothing else in the world. But by descent, by ancestry, by *kinship* we are Norwegians, and

> can never be anything else no matter how desperately some of us try. (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 204).

Moreover, Rølvaag underlines the fact that their ancestry cannot be changed or denied, as well as their American citizenship. Having found their home in America, the Norwegian-Americans would find benefits in the cohesion of their ethnic group. Like other ethnicities that have built America, the Norwegians would hence occupy a relevant place in the smorgasbord of nations that are part of America.

There is a unifying vision in Rølvaag's ideas that emerge from this book, as the issues he struggled with "reflect the timeless tensions between immigrant pasts and assimilated futures that are the circumstances of all Americans." (Zempel, 1998, 3). The homemaking myths they all created were instrumental in helping them build a sense of belonging in their new country. Whether they were Norwegians or Romanians, the immigrants experienced tensions between their pasts in the homelands and their futures in America that would eventually lead to their complete assimilation. However, the preservation of the cultural traits they had inherited from their ancestors could provide them with a stronger sense of unity that would prove beneficial for the emergence of a sense of place.

Rølvaag saw the preservation of a people's national identity as essential and considered language as the enduring foundation of culture; the Norwegian culture would survive as long as the Norwegian language lived, no longer (Boewe, 1959, 7). Boewe further considers Rølvaag's crusade for the preservation of the Norwegian cultural heritage in America was not necessarily successful, but his desire to perpetuate the Norwegian culture, which is visible in all of his writings, would prove beneficial. The value of his fiction, but also his criticism of the American society which he considered to be concentrated on material benefits "and his positive program of cultural pluralism based on the integrity of language and religion entitle him to a respectful hearing and place him among the significant social critics of America." (Boewe, 1959, 12). A professor of Norwegian with the immigrant experience of a fisherman that found his place in the smaller Norwegian-American community within the larger American society, Rølvaag dedicated his work, both fictional and historical, to telling the story of those who emigrated to the New World in search of a better life. Writing all his books in Norwegian, his conviction was that the ethnic group he was part of could only

continue to exist, to have a voice in the heterogeneous American concerto by preserving the cultural identity inherited from the homeland. The homeland was the key to creating a new home across the Atlantic.

Preliminary Conclusions

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigrant experience implied a combination of great expectations and struggles. If the myth of the American dream promoted the opportunities America offered and the idea of fearless and ambitious heroes that accomplish their goals, Rølvaag decided to speak about the costs of the immigration. The immigrants faced many difficulties, but perhaps the most poignant was the alienation they experienced, as they felt they no longer belonged to their homeland, but neither to their new country. Strangers between two worlds, their longing for the old family ties, for the homeland would linger despite the material betterment. As Orm Øverland observed, "Although the gains for the immigrant were many and significant, the losses were irreparable and the greatest loss is the tragedy of alienation" (Øverland, 1979, 81).

Rølvaag depicted the inner struggles of the immigrants in both his fiction and historical work. Perceiving the perils of uprooting, he illustrated in *Giants in the Earth* two opposing attitudes to immigration: Per Hansa embraces the opportunities of the pioneer life with enthusiasm, facing with frantic courage the challenges he encounters in the prairie, whereas Beret Holm can only perceive the dangers of the wild and unwelcoming environment they choose to settle in, sinking deeper into anxiety and depression, embodying at the same time Rølvaag's belief that the cultural heritage of the homeland needs to be preserved for a meaningful immigrant experience.

Øverland also mentions that Rølvaag's ideas were considered as unrealistic and romantic by supporters of assimilation, but he argues Rølvaag was ahead of his time as the melting-pot that he detested is no longer perceived as a symbol for cultural development in the American society which has started to encourage cultural diversity. We can now appreciate Rølvaag's message, Øverland argues, as awareness regarding cultural diversity has increased, allowing us to understand the insight of a man between two worlds (Øverland, 1979, 86). Moreover, Rølvaag, unlike other Norwegian-American writers, found his place in the canon of American literature by revealing in his fiction the interest in the existential issues pertaining to immigration, his

concern for the inner struggles of the pioneers on the prairie. His perception is all the more valuable due to its double character, as he was a writer with an immigrant background that lived and worked within two language codes and that thrived within a double consciousness (Gulliksen, 2004, 216).

Finally, Rølvaag's view on literature, that "Truly great literature does two things. It reflects life, and it brings forth and enriches life in the mind of the person who associates with it" (*Concerning Our Heritage*, 1998, 159), reveals his belief that literary texts need to enrich life by creating a connection with the reader. A visionary, he was a cultural pluralist as he envisioned America as a "mosaic of ethnic communities, each preserving and promoting its own language, culture, and traditions, which could be united around American political ideals." (Zempel, 1998, 7). Remaining true to his belief, he reflected his immigrant life in his fiction by successfully weaving ties with all those that had immigrated, illustrating the inner tensions of uprooted existences.

CHAPTER 4
KNUT HAMSUN'S
UNACHIEVABLE AMERICAN DREAM

This chapter[46] will discuss Hamsun's American experience by focusing on his writings connected to America with an introductory part that provides a short biography of the author, as it represents a relevant background element for understanding his immigrant experience. Hence, the first subchapter will analyse his critical view of America and the position of the immigrant as it emerges from the book he published after his return *Fra det Moderne Amerikas Aandsliv* (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*). The second subchapter will concentrate on Hamsun's fiction, namely on "Fear" ("Rædsel") and "On the Prairie" ("Paa prærien"), two of the short stories published in the volume *Kratskog: historier og skitser* ("Brushwood: Stories and Sketches") that illustrate some of the difficulties Hamsun encountered on the Dakota prairie. The volume has not been translated entirely into English, and the sketches "Fear" in Sverre Arestad's translation, published in 1970, and "On the Prairie", in a newer translation, that of Richard Nelson Current, published in 2003, have been selected. These two dimensions, completed by elements from his biography, by some of his letters (written from America to Sven Tveraas, Kristofer Janson and Yngvar Laws) and one of his articles ("Festina lente", 1928) in which he evokes America provide a comprehensive image of Hamsun's American experience. All the quotations in English are supported by the original text in Norwegian in order to offer a truthful image of his narratives. The goal of this blended analysis of Hamsun's essays on America, of his fiction tackling his American experience and of letters and articles is to reach to a comprehensive conclusion regarding his relation to America emerging from his immediate experience and its reflection in fiction.

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[46] This chapter is based on the article *Deconstructing the American Dream: America through Knut Hamsun's Eyes*, Mureşan, 2017, pp. 147-154.

However, before starting the analysis of Hamsun's image of America, it is necessary to highlight the most relevant research carried out on his work. Of the extremely numerous books and studies published on Hamsun's writing, the focus was on the resources that were useful for the purpose of this endeavour, those in close connection with his American immigrant experience. Previous research on Hamsun's two America voyages was conducted by Hanna Astrup Larsen in one of the first biographies of Hamsun published in the United States in 1922, then by John T. Flanagan, who wrote about his early years in the Northwest, while Harald Næss's article on Knut Hamsun and America, published in 1967, focused on his immigrant experience as it emerged from his articles, from the America book and its influence on Hamsun's fiction. Harald Næss also engaged in a magnificent work of editing and translating Hamsun's letters, together with James McFarlane. Furthermore, Arlow Andersen and Sverre Arestad, who also translated some of Hamsun's sketches that make overt reference to his life in America, have had significant contributions to understanding the author's view of America. Rolf Nyboe Nettum's analysis of the main themes in Hamsun's works published between 1890 and 1912 is a highly relevant contribution to an in-depth perspective of the author's early writings. Moreover, Robert Ferguson's comprehensive Hamsun biography *Enigma: The Life of Knut Hamsun* published in 1987, contains extensive details about his life as an immigrant in the New World, while Ingar Sletten Kolloen delves into Hamsun's controversial character in the volume *Hamun. Svermer og erobrer* (*Knut Hamsun: Dreamer and Dissenter*). More recent titles present new perspectives on Hamsun, and one such example is Henning Howlid Wærp's modern eco-critical analysis of Hamsun's writing, published in 2018, that comes with a fresher and unexplored approach of the author's love for nature and discontent with industrialization in connection with the recent concerns regarding the future of our planet.

When it comes to the aim of this research, it is important to emphasize the unicity of Hamun's place in the analysis of Norwegian immigrant narratives. On the one hand, this is due to his immigrant experience, which he perceives as negative, unable to integrate in the American culture, and, on the other hand, due to the tremendous success he later achieved as a world-renowned writer. Thus, Knut Hamsun is the most famous figure of the Norwegian emigration to America because of his importance in the Norwegian literature as a representative of neo-romanticism through ground-breaking literary

works such as *Hunger* (*Sult*) or *Growth of the Soil* (*Markens Grøde*), which won him the Nobel prize for literature in 1920. As Robert Ferguson observes, Knut Hamsun has had a decisive effect on European and American literature of the twentieth century; he influenced major writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, Thomas Mann, Herman Hesse, André Gide, Franz Kafka and others. Nevertheless, his support for Hitler during the Second World War would ruin his reputation (Ferguson, 1987, 1). However, the story of Hamsun's emigration to America is different from the traditional story of the immigrant who starts from the lowest conditions and, through a laborious process of self-discovery fuelled by ambition and hard work, fulfils his American dream and becomes successful. On the contrary, Knut Hamsun returns to Norway disillusioned, in an even poorer condition than the one that had determined him to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of a better life.

Knut Hamsun's Life

Knut Hamsun was full of uncertainty in his quest for self-discovery and full of restlessness in his search for the literary form he needed. His son, Tore Hamsun, confesses that his uncertainty and restlessness could be seen even in the numerous signatures he used at the beginning of his career – Knud Pedersen Hamsund, Knud Pedersen, Knut Pederson, Knut Hamsunn, Knut Hamsund – only to opt for Knut Hamsun when his name was misspelled 'Hamsun' because of a printing error in an article from 1885, believing it to be perfect for achieving worldwide popularity (T. Hamsun, 1956, 31). Ironically, considering his opinions regarding England, Hamsun found his new name had a good resonance in English, perhaps a prerequisite for achieving global recognition.

Hanna Astrup Larsen coins Hamsun's image as a wanderer, a lonely figure, an outsider who pays the price for being different from the crowd and for not being able to conform to the rules of society (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 3). Born in Lom, in Gudbrandsalen, on the 4th of August 1859, the fourth in a peasant family of seven children, Knud Pedersen was forced to move with his family to Hamsund, Hamarøy, in Northern Norway, in the hope of a better life. His childhood home in Nordland would become his Ithaca, a place where the sea and mountains meet, where little Knut would live a happy life, despite the poverty endured by the family. Hamarøy was the place that had a strong influence on Hamsun and his fiction, (Ferguson, 1987, 9), because, as Harald Beyer observed, the nature up north, with woods and mountains, the hectic

summers and the brittle atmosphere of the summer days "awakened an intense love of nature in him" (Beyer, 1979, 271).

Unfortunately for Hamsun, his life changed when he was sent at the age of nine to live with his uncle at Preisted, Nordland, where he faces a bitter existence because of the violent behaviour of Hans Olsen. Moreover, Hamsun was supposed to help in the farm, chop wood, and keep the books of his uncle, while being constantly underfed and isolated all this time (Ferguson, 1987, 10-12), having such a lonely and miserable life that his only amusement was wandering in the woods and the cemetery, where he would spell out the inscriptions on crosses, making up stories about them and talking to himself (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 13). However, his uncle's library was a refuge which allowed him to become familiar with some of the Norwegian writers. Hamsun eventually returned home and the following years were spent by doing apprentice work of various kinds. Afterwards, he travelled to the Lofoten Islands, to Langøy, where he is appointed teacher, but later works also as an assistant to the town clerk, a job which permits him to read extensively and to become increasingly aware of his need to write (Ferguson, 1987, 20-21).

His dream of becoming a known writer takes him to Christiania (today's Oslo), where he enrols at the university, but Hamsun realizes he is not fit for the university milieu, which was at the time under the influence of the old academic traditions (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 19). After a disappointing trip to Copenhagen to publish a manuscript, a period similar to the earlier years follows, when he works in road construction for two years. Moreover, after unsuccessfully trying to fulfil his dream of becoming a writer in Norway, struggling to survive in Christiania in the harsh winter of 1879-1880, as he later depicted it in his well-known novel *Hunger*, Hamsun set his mind for the New World. A voyage to America started to sound more and more appealing to him, so Knut Hamsun embarked for New York from Hamburg in January 1882, when the Norwegian emigration to America was at its highest.

Thousands of Norwegians emigrated to America since the sloop *Restauration* left Stavanger in 1825 and, just like them, Knut Hamsun left the Old World for the New World in search of a better life. Dissatisfied with the failures of becoming a writer in the homeland, Hamsun hoped that America would offer him the chance to succeed, "when a callow, ignorant

youth, crossed the Atlantic to bring poetry to the lives of the Norwegian emigrants to America" (Flanagan, 1939, 397). Flanagan highlights his naivety and ignorance regarding the life of the immigrants, while Hanna Astrup Larsen observes something pathetic in his youthful ambitions, particularly since the immigrants were absorbed in building their communities. Hence, Hamsun's emigrated countrymen cared too little for his message and, conservative as they were, preferred "to sing the old songs and dream the old dreams of the fjælls and fjords" (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 21-22). Full of hope, Hamsun carried a reference letter from the famous Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson to Rasmus B. Anderson, professor at the University of Wisconsin, who occupied an important position in the Norwegian-American community and encouraged the immigrants to write (Lovoll, 1999, 214), expecting help in achieving his dream of brightening the lives of the Norwegian-Americans by opening their hearts to poetry.

Hamsun's first impressions of America were very similar to those of the other 29 000 Norwegians who emigrated the same year, as he is overwhelmed by the towering buildings, the telephone and telegraph wires hanging between the houses, the Brooklyn Bridge he sees in New York, or the new city hall he sees in Chicago (Ferguson, 1987, 47). Yet, despite his enthusiasm upon arrival, he was soon to be disappointed. Anderson is not so eager to help him, suggesting to the newcomer that one must help himself in America and advises him to seek some work. Eventually, Hamsun follows his brother Per (Peter) to Elroy, Wisconsin, where he works for a while as a store clerk. However, understanding that his brother's situation was not the one depicted in his America letters, that he was more inclined towards drinking than working, Hamsun resorts to manual labour on several farms near Elroy, but he moves afterwards to Madelia, Minnesota, where he finds work in a lumberyard. Life in the New World is not as bright as Hamsun had envisioned, but in Madelia he improves his knowledge of English with the help of a schoolteacher by the name Johnston, and has the chance to attend a lecture given by Mark Twain, who leaves a deep impression on the aspiring writer (Andersen, 1967, 179).

Another sign of betterment is the encounter with Kristofer Janson, the Unitarian minister and writer that enjoyed great popularity during that time and that had established a Unitarian mission in Minneapolis (Ferguson, 1987, 59). Janson invites Hamsun to assist him in his missionary work, so he moves to Minneapolis in the house of the minister and his wife, Drude Krog

Janson, a writer herself, author of *En ung Pige. Fortælling* (*A saloonkeeper's Daughter)*. At the Jansons, he spends a year translating texts and talks into English, reading and practising his writing, until he is diagnosed with galloping tuberculosis in 1884, which determines him to return home to die in peace. However, the diagnostic proved incorrect and Hamsun recovered on his way to the homeland. Once returned, he wrote articles for *Dagbladet* and, after getting in contact with the editor of the newspaper, Lars Holst, Hamsun published an article on Mark Twain, a writer he appreciated greatly.

The wanderer still could not find his place in Norway, despite his improving health, as he felt alone and friendless (Ferguson, 1987, 66). Therefore, he decided to make a second voyage to America, but this time his intention was not to settle there, but to make enough money to secure himself a start in his writing career (Næss&McFarlane, 1990, 19). If he had crossed the Atlantic two years before with high expectations of becoming a writer, Hamsun embarked again for America without any illusions that the Norwegian immigrant community or others in the New World were interested in his words (Sletten Kolloen, 2009, 40). Thus, Knut Hamsun travelled again to the New World in August 1886, this time as a correspondent for the newspapers *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten*. Nevertheless, the aspiring writer needed to perform different jobs to survive.

His first job during the second American experience was that of a streetcar conductor in Chicago, a job which did not suit him because of the poor sense of direction he possessed, but also because he was always distracted and absorbed in his own thoughts (Andersen, 1967, 181). From Chicago, Hamsun went to North Dakota, where he spent the summer months on a bonanza farm in the Red River Valley and the tough life he experienced on the prairie would be depicted in several of his sketches. The difficult life on the prairie made him realise how oppressed were the people who struggled to live meaningful lives, being concerned with more than just the wages they needed to survive, so Hamsun envisioned writing about Evans with the silk shirts, or even about the Scandinavian who nourished his dream of becoming a writer (Sletten Kolloen, 2009, 42). He eventually returned to Minneapolis, to his Unitarian friends, where he remained until 1888, gave lectures on Scandinavian and French writers to modest audiences, but his impatience with his situation, his poverty, his inability to produce something new and unique, but also his impatience with America grew constantly (Ferguson, 1987, 93). Thus, Hamsun decided to end his wanderings and begin real work

(Astrup Larsen, 1922, 28), so he put an end to his American experience by giving a farewell lecture at Dania Hall, in 1888, to raise money for the return voyage. He delivered an attack over the much-praised American freedom and he bitterly criticised American materialism to a hall full of Norwegian-Americans; the ideas presented here would be the basis of a book he published upon his return, *Fra det moderne Amerikas aandsliv* (*The Cultural Life of Modern America)* (Andersen, 1967, 181). The hopes Hamsun had when he embarked for America had disappeared, as he had failed once again to find opportunities for leading his life according to his skills as a writer; as Hanna Astrup Larsen observed, "He had bruised himself on Old World littleness; quite naturally, he looked to the New World for bigger visions, ampler spaces, and a saner estimate of a man's worth. In this he was destined to be sorely disappointed." (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 21). Disillusioned with America and the country's myth of liberty, Hamsun settled for a while in Copenhagen, which was the cultural capital of Scandinavia at the time, and, despite the difficult times, despite the fact he was starving while he was wandering through the streets of the Danish capital, Hamsun confessed that he felt at home and stresses how even the simple gesture of greeting reveals the great differences between the two societies:

> How comfortable I feel in this country. I do assure you, the whole nature of things, the way of life here is essentially in harmony with my mind and my nature! This is Europe, and I am a European – God be praised! One has time to live here – one finds the time – one even takes time to stop outside bookshop windows and read the book titles [...]. And then the European way of greeting! That appeals to me – it is noble and beautiful – with a deep sweep of the hat – without saying anything – as, with bared head, one walks past the person one is greeting. In America they said: '*How do you do*?' and walked on by; and before I had time to answer, the person who had spoken was ten paces behind me.[47] ("Letter to Yngvar Laws", 1990, 87)[48].

[47] Original text in Norwegian: "Hvor dette Land er mig behageligt! Jeg forsikrer Dig, den hele Væren – Livsordning her er i den inderste Harmoni med mit Sind, min Natur! Her er Europa, og jeg er Europæer – gudskjelov! Man har Tid til at leve her – man tar Tid til det – man tar endog Tid til at stanse udenfor Boghandlervinduerne og læse Bogtitler [...]. Og saa den Europæiske Hilsen! Den tiltaler Mig – den er adelig og skjøn – med Hatten dybt sænket – uden at sige noget – med Hodet blottet passerer man der man hilser paa". ("Brev til Yngvar Laws", 1994, 78).

[48] Hereafter, all of Hamsun's works will be cited by providing the title of the work, the year and pages.

Unlike Rølvaag, the immigrant who successfully adapted to the new environment and became an accomplished writer in the adoptive country, Hamsun's not one, but two attempts to find his place in America proved unsuccessful. Rølvaag left the homeland as a simple immigrant, without high expectations, but worked his way through to becoming an accomplished writer, putting all his efforts into improving his writing skills in order to be acknowledged as a valuable writer, particularly in Norway and within his ethnic group. Hamsun, on the other hand, had fleeting attempts at achieving his goal of bringing poetry into the lives of Norwegian-Americans and eventually renounced the thought that he could achieve success in America. Perhaps this happened due to the fact that his "overpowering ambition was, of course, to write, and only intellectual work could ever satisfy him." (Flanagan, 1939, 405). Furthermore, his work as a streetcar conductor in Chicago or as farmhand in North Dakota were just some stops, but he most likely lacked the necessary patience to see his dream achieved in America, or the American environment proved unsuitable for his development. He was interested in literature and, as Even Arntzen mentioned, "for Hamsun personally, *fiction* is what makes life worth living, the world to endure, the existence meaningful."[49] (Arntzen, 2009, 206).

The return to Europe proved beneficial for Knut Hamsun. In Copenhagen he wrote the first chapters of his breakthrough novel, *Hunger*, and succeeded to publish them as a serial, anonymously, in *Ny Jord* ("New Soil") starting from November, 1888. Edward Brandes, the brother of the famous author and literary critic Georg Brandes, had accepted his manuscript after Hamsun had made a profound impression on him (Andersen, 1967, 182). The pages had a strong impact in the Danish intellectual world. The next year, in 1889, Hamsun was invited by the student society of the University of Copenhagen and he chose to deliver a revised version of his farewell lecture held in Minneapolis. Soon afterwards he published the expanded version, *Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, hypercritical of the American society and way of life. As Ferguson observes, America had been for Bjørnson a place of civic reception and celebration, but "Hamsun's was the working man's experience of America, a harsh place where anonymity, insecurity, rootlessness and poverty formed the common fate." (Ferguson, 1987, 103), which could surely

[49] Own translation from Norwegian: "For Hamsun personlig er altså *diktningen* det som gjør livet verdt å leve, verden til å holde ut, livseksistensen meningsfull." (Arntzen, 2009, 206).

explain Hamsun's disappointment and bitter criticism regarding the New World.

Hamsun returned to Norway in 1889 and published eleven articles in *Dagbladet*, articles which would bring him great popularity. The following spring, he moved back to Copenhagen, finished *Hunger* and had it published on the 5th of June 1890. "One of the great novels of urban alienation" (Ferguson, 1987, 110), *Hunger* places great emphasis on the social conditions (Tomescu Baciu, 2014, 151) and the extreme situations the hero experiences reflect the desperate periods in Hamsun's life when he was starving on the streets in Christiania. His literary debut changed his life. He started holding lectures on Norwegian literature, then published several books, *Mysterier* (*Mysteries*, 1892), *Redaktør Lynge* (*Editor Lynge*, 1893), *Ny Jord* (*Shallow Soil*, 1893) and *Pan* (1894), which reveal Hamsun's concern for providing a close psychological analysis of certain "outcasts from society", as Alrik Gustafson highlights, namely certain highly sensitive over-cultured men that act as spectators rather than active participants to the activities in a society, showing a critical and superior attitude towards it (Gustafson, 1969, 237).

After a short unsuccessful marriage, Hamsun married Marie Andersen in 1909, who moved with him to Hamarøy, his childhood home. In the meantime, they had four children and the now established writer worked hard to finish another novel, *Markens Grøde* (*Growth of the Soil*), which he published in 1917, after moving to Larvik, and later to Nørholm. Soon afterwards, in 1920, Hamsun gained worldwide recognition after he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature for *Growth of the Soil*, a novel that reflected Hamsun's appreciation for rural life and his discontent with modernity. He continued to publish works such as the August Trilogy – *Landstrykere* (*Wayfarers*, 1927), *August* (1930), and *Men Livet lever* (*The Road Leads On*, 1933) –, but also *Ringen sluttet* (*The Ring is Closed*, 1936). Yet, the second half of his life would be severely affected by his overt appreciation for Germany during the Second World War. His resentment for the English would further fuel his appreciation for the German values and society, particularly for Adolf Hitler throughout the Second World War, which would lead to a trial that concluded he had impaired mental faculties and to his condemnation at the end of the war. His last novel, *Paa gjengrodde Stier* (*On Overgrown Paths)*, published in 1949, at the age of ninety, was his last attempt to prove his sanity. He died on the 19th of February 1952 at Nørholm. Considered controversial because of his

political views, Hamsun was, as Ferguson observed, “an unusual man that defied easy categorisation” (Ferguson, 1987, 422), with an enormous contribution to the art of writing.

With a literary career that included novels, short stories, plays, travel books, newspaper articles, published in a period of over seventy years, Knut Hamsun “had improvised with a dazzling and faithful consistency over a single theme: his life.” (Ferguson, 1987, 6). His son, Tore Hamsun, drew attention to the struggles in his father’s life, of which the chief struggle was with writing, even when he had faith in himself, and “the same forces that since kept him alive when hunger and disease and disappointment worked hard against his health and mind.”[50] (T. Hamsun, 1956, 31). This struggle for achieving his dream of becoming a writer, although unfulfilled during his two America voyages, would eventually be conquered and the dream accomplished in the homeland.

Knut Hamsun experienced migration throughout his life, if we consider his internally displaced family, as well as his American and Danish voyages. Thus, his background is one that speaks of displacement, marginality and drift (Sjølyst-Jackson, 2010, 16), foreshadowing the figure of the wanderer that constantly appeared in his writing. From a material point of view, his background is highly different from that of the great Norwegian writers such as Ibsen, Bjørnson or Kielland, who benefitted from the support of their families for access to education, but also from that of Vinje, Garborg or Duun, who acquired formal education on their own (Næss&McFarlane, 1990, 9), and yet succeeded to become the second most discussed classical Norwegian writer after Henrik Ibsen. His vision to focus on the inner world of the soul and mind still fascinates today’s readers.

HAMSUN’S VIEW OF AMERICA AND OF THE IMMIGRANT

This subchapter will examine Knut Hamsun’s perception of America and of the immigrant in America as he presented it in *The Cultural Life of Modern America*, a “thesis”, as Hamsun called it, or perhaps a collection of essays published in Copenhagen 1889, considered as “a violent diatribe against

[50] Own translation from Norwegian: “Det var de samme kreftene som siden holdt liv i ham da sult og sykdom og skuffelser slet hardt på helsen og sinnet.” (T. Hamsun, 1956, 31).

American materialism" (Flanagan, 1939, 397). The analysis will begin with the background of his stark criticism and will further on discuss the main critiques Hamsun had towards the American society and culture, regarding their patriotism, materialism, but also the arts and literature.

Hamsun had a different American experience than many of the Norwegian immigrants in America and his unaccomplished dreams may have determined him to deeply criticize the American society and depict the New World in darker colours than perhaps necessary, with the intention to oppose the image America had in the Scandinavian press, as he himself admitted (Gordon Morgridge, 1969, xix). Hence, this book abounds in subjectivity, revealing the author's resentment towards the United States, which he considered the land of materialism and inverted values. Moreover, his ambition and need to assert himself as a writer together with his struggle for survival by taking different casual jobs that gave him no satisfaction have set their mark on the thirty-year-old aspiring writer.

Hamsun's status in America is highly relevant for this discussion. Lars Frode Larsen mentions that Hamsun had seen the American society, more precisely, the Norwegian-American Midwest, from the perspective of the lower classes, very different from that of Bjørnson, who had been welcomed as a celebrated writer and lecturer (Larsen, 2003, 105). Nevertheless, Hamsun's experience can be considered twofold, as he also benefitted from the advantages of the Norwegian cultural elite in the Midwest by living for a while with Kristofer Janson's family, having access to a large library and being able to interact with some of the most enlightened immigrants. Harald Næss's explanation regarding Hamsun's limited experience in America also needs to be mentioned, because he spent his years in America in a pioneer district where people dedicated the remains of a working day to nationalistic and religious trivialities, and his experience among these people couldn't have furnished "adequate material for a book on American civilization" (Næss, 1967, 309-310). Nettum considers that *The Cultural Life of Modern America* is highly witty and polemical, as sharp as a knife, representative for his new literary programme, while his criticism of America is based on 'intelligence' and 'refined psychology', indicating two assessments that do not necessarily converge (Nettum, 170, 46, 49). Nevertheless, Hamsun's depiction of America "is both delightful reading and an important document for students of Hamsun's thought and literary style" (Næss, 1967, 305), but

also useful for achieving a broader perspective on the Norwegian emigration to America, particularly because of its distinct tone.

It is necessary to mention that Hamsun admitted later in life that the book was a 'youthful sin' and that he did not want to have it republished because of its poor and childish style (Næss, 1967, 305). The book is considered deeply ambivalent, like many of Hamsun's polemical work (Sjølyst-Jackson, 2010, 15) or "full of prejudice and misinformation" (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 30) and based on an "inflation of personal experience that underlies many of the generalizations in his subsequent study of America" (Gordon Morgridge, 1969, xviii). Moreover, Hamsun warns the readers in the preface of the book that "Truth is neither two-sided nor objective; truth is precisely disinterested subjectivity."[51] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 3), stressing the subjective tone of his depiction of America as he anticipated possible negative reactions from the readers. Hence, this scathing account of a country with not enough culture and too much pride and patriotism (Rubin & Rubin, 2004, 56) was written by Hamsun after spending some miserable years in the America, after experiencing hardship and disillusion, despite the high expectations that had carried him across the Atlantic.

Moreover, Hamsun's recollection of America, his perception of the country to which millions of Europeans were migrating at the time has to be discussed from the wanderer's perspective (Tomescu Baciu, 2010, 26), of the traveller who moves incessantly from one place to another without the intention to settle. Eventually, the difficulties he experienced, but also his restlessness and the ambition of becoming a well-known writer together with the lack of patience determined young Hamsun to admit his failure in accomplishing his dream of bringing poetry to the life of Norwegian-Americans (Mureșan, 2017, 151). Furthermore, the appreciation Hamsun revealed towards the wanderer figure made him deprecate all aspects of the West European and American industrial society in the scramble for money, the rise of the newly rich or the emancipation of women were expressions of social change (Beyer, 1979, 275). The nonconformist wanderer could hardly find his place in such a world and is bound to disclose all its sins and superficialities, as Hamsun does in *The Cultural Life of Modern America*.

[51] Original text in Norwegian: "Sanddruhed er hverken Tosidighed eller Objektivitet, Sanddruhed er netop den uegennyttige Subjektivitet." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889).

However, despite its subjectivity, the book was well received by the public and Hamsun's style was appreciated, although the ideas he expressed in it were perceived with reluctance.

Barbara Gordon Morgridge, who has translated *Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv* in English, highlights the fact that the book was preceded by various newspaper polemics or autobiographical comments, but the essay on Mark Twain published by Hamsun in March-April 1885 and the article "Fra Amerika", appeared under the signature "Ego" in *Aftenposten* in January and February 1885 are more closely related to the book (Gordon Morgridge, 1969, xxv).

Hamsun begins by tackling the American patriotism and nationalism, with an opening line that refers to the hustle and bustle of life in America that makes the foreigner bewildered "through the intense noise, the restlessness, the hectic life in the streets"[52] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 5). The noise and agitation that strike the immigrant upon arrival are to be found everywhere, revealing a society in the making that is constantly fuelled by people on the move and Hamsun's first ironic remark regards the fact that Americans are convinced that energy and restlessness are traits that Freedom itself has bestowed upon their national character (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 5). As he continues, Hamsun mocks the wondrous tales about immigrants that have changed their lives because of the "uplifting power of freedom"[53] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6) and shifts the focus to the situation of the immigrants.

This particular part of the first chapter is of relevance to this research as Hamsun describes the influence of the American environment upon the immigrants from the perspective of the insider. Moreover, the seemingly sincere character of this paragraph, with a focus on inner thoughts, makes it stand out from the ironic tone that can be found everywhere in the rest of the book. Thus, he immediately dismisses the idea that freedom in America accounts for the rapid transformation of the immigrant and brings forth the obvious cause, in his view, namely the economic situation. As the costs of living for a family that lives on two crowns a day in Norway, Hamsun

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[52] Original text in Norwegian: "den store Støj, Rastløsheden, det jagende Liv i Gaderne" (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 1).
[53] Original text in Norwegian: "Frihedens opdragende Magt" (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 2).

observes, are of a dollar and a half, and this amount of money can only be earned by doing extensive work, by keeping a steady pace (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6), this accounts for the incessant whirl typical for the American society.

As an immigrant in America, Hamsun continues, "you find yourself in the midst of a foreign land which, however long you live there, remains a foreign land."[54] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6). Questions of alienation, belonging and identity are discussed further on and the immigrant aspiring writer lays emphasis on the costs paid by the immigrants, on the impossibility of feeling at home in the adoptive country. He also stresses the considerable differences between the homeland and America, which make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a foreigner to understand; the immigrant will always feel a stranger there, although he puts a lot of effort into adapting to his new environment (Mureșan, 2017, 151). The livelihood, Hamsun argues, is caused by the nervousness experienced by the immigrants, by the constant state of alarm in which they find themselves, "pressured by so much that is unfamiliar, astonished by all that is new, confused by all that is strange"[55] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6). Hence, the unfamiliar character, novelty and strangeness of the new environment clearly influences the newcomers, confuses them and represents a continuous source of stress for them: the pressure to adapt.

Hamsun's analysis of the immigrant's state of mind reveals some most unexpected everyday situations that mean nothing to someone who has not experienced immigration. One such instance is shopping for a pair of shoes, which, he argues, upsets the immigrant who dreads his English is not good enough to haggle (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6). Another example that Hamsun provides refers to the tension the immigrant feels for fear of not having paid taxes, revealing his insecurity and confusion regarding the relation to the authorities. Hence, by referring to banal situations that every individual experiences, Hamsun shows that the immigrant feels a constant pressure even in common daily activities that

[54] Original text in Norwegian: "at man der staar midt i et fremmed Land, som, hvor længe man end bor der, blir En et fremmed Land." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 3).
[55] Original text in Norwegian: "trykket af alle de uvante Vilkaar, forbauset over det ny, forvirret af det fremmede." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 3).

require knowledge of English. He concludes that "their inner calm is gone"[56] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 6); they lose their inner peace, but they are active, as is required of them by the American society.

The irony is felt again in the last sentences of the paragraph dedicated to the immigrants' experience, as Hamsun writes about how America sets people's minds and energy in motion, since they have to become active the moment they step on American soil to earn money for their first meal. He then suggests that the political freedom in the country has nothing to do with the hectic mode of living specific to the American society.

After having analysed the inner struggle of the immigrants, Hamsun focuses on nationalism, the second most striking feature of the American character, in his view. He describes how Americans organise parades to honour war veterans, a symbolic expression of their strong national feelings that serve the sole purpose of attracting attention. The criticism of American patriotism continues with a sentence-like phrase: "There is no end to their patriotism; it is a patriotism that never flinches, and it is just as loudmouthed as it is vehement."[57] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 7). Moreover, he argues that Americans are ignorant of what is happening beyond the boundaries of their country, convinced that such freedom and development cannot be seen anywhere else in the world, nor such intelligent people as in America (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 8).

Again, the image of the foreigner is brought forth as Hamsun observes how the immigrant is often wounded by the American arrogance and a sense of superiority, which are a cause for constant suffering: "He is bypassed, laughed at, made a fool of, pitied, and ridiculed."[58] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 8). This humiliation eventually leads to Americanization, Hamsun claims, as the immigrant quickly learns and adopts the formal elements of the American culture: he learns the language, and to wear his hat the way Americans do, but also other external patterns of behaviour that are specific to the Americans (or Yankees, as he calls them).

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[56] Original text in Norwegian: "Deres Ro er borte" (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 3).

[57] Original text in Norwegian: "Deres Patriotisme er uden Grændser; det er en Patriotisme, som aldrig blinker, og den er lige saa højrøstet som den er hæftig." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 5).

[58] Original text in Norwegian: "Han blir tilsidesat, blir smilet ad, gjort Nar ad, beklaget og spottet." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 6-7).

His ironic conclusion over the Americanization process is: "Then American national pride has reached fulfilment: there is one more American in America."[59] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 8). Moreover, Hamsun considers Americans to be ignorant of things happening outside their country, because of a lack of comprehensive education in schools, where only American geography and history are taught, with insignificant reference to the rest of the world; this, he claims, is valid for all strata of the society (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 9).

Hamsun refers again to his personal experience and expresses his discontent with the fact that Americans called him a 'Swede', in a pejorative sense, denoting a limited knowledge of other nations and peoples, but also the conviction that all Scandinavians are Swedes, despite attempts at explaining the difference between Norwegians, Danes or Swedes. He continues by saying that "As a Norwegian in America I have had the experience of being taken for a Swede, and as a Swede I have been bypassed, laughed at, made a fool of, pitied, and ridiculed."[60] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 10), revealing how the immigrant might be affected by prejudice in the adoptive country. In order to feel integrated, Hamsun mentions, the immigrant tries to become American as quickly as possible, adopting the language and discarding the elements that belong to 'the old Adam', trying to erase the elements of his foreign origin. Thus, on his way to becoming American, the foreigner needs to renounce the old-culture elements and embrace the American way.

Another important topic in Hamsun's discussion refers to the measures taken by the American government to limit immigration. He considers the ban on immigration to be an expression of the sense of superiority he had previously mentioned, while the argument that there is no land available for immigrants is dismissed as a pretext, a joke (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 11). To support his ideas, Hamsun refers to statistics that show that there still is enough land for immigrants and claims that the restrictions on immigration testify for the "Americans' strongly developed

[59] Original text in Norwegian: "Da er den amerikanske Nationalstolthed sket Fyldest; der er en Amerikaner mer i Amerika." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 6-7).
[60] Original text in Norwegian: "Jeg har egen Erfaring fra Amerika for, at jeg som Nordmand var Svenske, og at jeg som Svenske er bleven tilsidesat, smilet ad, gjort Nar ad, beklaget og spottet." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 11).

celestial belief in themselves"[61] that ignores the importance of foreign labour, reflecting, in his view, how far the American patriotism can go (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 13).

The first chapter ends with remarks concerning discrimination among immigrants, as Hamsun claims American patriotism is carried to extremes when immigrants are compelled to deny their ethnicity, to seem American-born in order to find work. Clearly, these generalizations cannot be taken for granted, but they do, however, mention the superior status of the English immigrants in America, who are, according to Hamsun, the only people who have the respect of the Americans (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 14).

Hamsun continues his vehement criticism of the American society by concentrating on the American culture, starting from their attitude towards foreign ideas and cultures. Hence, he begins the attack by referring to the short history of the country, which should not, under normal circumstances, allow America to be self-sufficient and exclude the outside world (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 15). Furthermore, he argues America tries hard to remain on its own and dismisses any foreign influence on its culture. Advertising, Hamsun writes, is typical for Americans and directly linked to the agitation in the American society: "The noise is a feature of the American character; it is the whirring wings of publicity."[62]. From advertising, Hamsun turns to the main element of his criticism, namely materialism, as he observes that "America's most thriving sector is business – the headlong scramble for profit"[63] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 18). Hence, Hamsun confesses to have been struck by the greedy materialism, by the new American way of life that was focusing solely on acquiring financial gains, making all interests of its citizens revolve around profit (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 19). Yet, considering the fact that most Americans had emigrated to the New World because of economic causes, their energy was naturally directed towards earning as much money as possible in as short a time as possible (Mureșan, 2017, 152).

[61] Original text in Norwegian: "Amerikanernes stærkt udviklede Kinesertro paa sig selv" (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 17).
[62] Original text in Norwegian: "Støjen er et Træk i Amerikanernes Karakter, den er Vingesuset af Reklamens Aand." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 25).
[63] Original text in Norwegian: "Amerikas virksomste Liv er Forretningslivet, den hæseblæsende Kamp om Fordelen." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 26).

In addition, Hamsun claims that the stark materialism of the American society determines them to concentrate on figures and display this propensity “in all their thoughts and actions”[64], and the material progress represents even the state of American culture (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 20).

The second chapter of the book deals with American literature and the introductory paragraph underlines Hamsun’s opinion that literature is not a force in America, a society in the making of which people pay little importance to art and culture and are not interested in reading for personal development, but rather for amusement (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 24). As Arlow Andersen observed, in Hamsun’s view, the American newspapers were unintelligent and uninteresting, because they were cluttered with local news and sensational stories, dealing seriously with politics only when elections occurred (Andersen, 1967, 186). He considered the American journalism as hungry for scandal, for human misery and town gossip, where bribed editorials were not unheard of, concluding that “The American newspapers are restless and noisy, like life itself. They are raw and true to life.”[65] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 31). Hence, the restlessness of the American life permeates all aspects of its society and culture.

If Hamsun sees American journalism as reflecting the restlessness of the American life, he considers that American literature “is not the expression of American life that newspapers are”[66] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 33) since it contains too little reality, it praises and preaches and doesn’t touch Hamsun in any way (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 34). Of the American writers, Mark Twain earned his appreciation, and Hamsun considers him to be “the cleverest wit in American literature”[67] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 39). He further dedicates a good deal

[64] Original text in Norwegian: “i al deres Gøren og Laden.” (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 28).
[65] Original text in Norwegian: “De amerikanske Aviser er urolige og støjende som Livet selv; de er raa og sande.” (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 49).
[66] Original text in Norwegian: “Men i det hele og store er ikke den amerikanske Literatur detUdtryk for amerikansk Liv, som Aviserne er det.” (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 52).
[67] Original text in Norwegian: “men han er den amerikanske Literaturs vittigste Hoved” (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 63).

of his criticism towards Walt Whitman, for his unreadable poems, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, for his judgemental writing.

The next chapters discuss the visual arts, which Hamsun claims Americans cannot appreciate since their restlessness doesn't allow them to observe and listen, making them unresponsive (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 78), and the dramatic art, in which they have shown the greatest achievement (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 90). Hamsun then proceeds to the last chapter called "The Cultural Harvest", which tackles the concepts of freedom, the judicial system, schools, churches and American etiquette. When it comes to freedom, Hamsun considers it to be disproportionate, providing an example stemming from his immigrant experience, revealing the discordant character of American freedom. Hence, he writes, when an immigrant arrives in New York, he is dispossessed from the knife he uses for shredding his pipe tobacco, but can keep the revolver "for the revolver is the national murder weapon"[68] (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 105). Moreover, he continues by arguing that foreigners do not feel unconditionally free in America, where there is no clear distinction between freedom and democracy, he claims, so foreigners need to abide by the opinions that are dictated to them or suffer the consequences. Hence, individual freedom is sacrificed for mass freedom, wounding the individual in many ways (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 106). When referring to the Haymarket riot of 1886, Hamsun's criticism is directed towards the American judicial system that failed to bring justice and condemned people that had not been proved guilty simply because they were anarchists, and anarchism is viewed as dynamite, the source of all evil. Furthermore, he describes the conditions in American schools with irony, almost sarcasm, starting from the rootlessness of the Americans, referring to the numerous nationalities that make up America. As the immigrants had emigrated to the New World for economic reasons, they became less interested in learning, while the education was of poor quality, the curriculum focused only on America, particularly on arithmetic and history. Hamsun's reference to church life is less bitter, as he mentions the numerous congregations established by Americans, the ornaments in American churches, but mostly the sermons, which he considered superior to those in Norway, determining him to prefer to attend mass rather than go to the

[68] Original text in Norwegian "fordi Revolveren er det nationale Mordredskab." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 180).

theatre. However, Hamsun claims the moral standard was still represented by money, despite the great influence of the church in the community. When discussing the American etiquette in his ending remarks, Hamsun refers again to his experience as an immigrant, highlighting how distressing it can be for a foreigner to be stared at in the street, or even be laughed at or called names, especially if he has just emigrated from a country where the etiquette was more refined (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 136). His conclusion is that the American etiquette is an empty ceremony, and sustains his opinion by mentioning the shouted greetings in contrast with not thanking for the meal (*The Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1969, 138).

One conclusion can be drawn from the ideas presented by Hamsun in *The Cultural Life of Modern America*: "America's morality is money."[69] (124). He had a similar perspective almost thirty years later, when he published the article "Festina Lente", in *Aftenposten*, in 1928:

> God is forgotten, the mighty dollar has taken his place and the mechanic cannot ease the troubled soul. The road is closed. Under circumstances such as these America only increases speed. America will not stop for anything, it wants to get on, go on, forge a way ahead. Should America turn back? Absolutely not! It simply increases the pace a hundredfold, acts the hurricane and whips life up to a white heat. In Europe nowadays we have the word *Americanism*, the old days had *festina lente*.[70] ("Festina lente", 2003, 132).

"Festina Lente" speaks about the increasing rhythm of the American lifestyle, the growing restlessness, but it also reflects Hamsun's changed views on America, his gratitude for the American experience. The article, Harald Næss observes, is friendly criticism, as Hamsun realised America could not be held responsible for the agitation of modern life, which had become familiar in Europe as well (Næss, 1967, 311). Years after "his youthful sin", the America book, he admitted he appreciated some of the core American values, as the principles that attracted thousands of Europeans are those of equal liberty

[69] Original text in Norwegian "Amerikas Moral, det er Pengene." (*Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*, 1889, 216).

[70] Original text in Norwegian "Gud er glemt, dollaren viser sig avmektig til å erstatte ham, mekanikken lindrer ingen sjelenød. Veien er stengt. Under disse forhold er det at Amerika bare øker farten. Amerika vil aldeles ikke la sig stanse av hindringer, det vil frem, det vil bryte sig vei. Skulde Amerika vende om? Ingenlunde! Det setter bare hundrefold mere fart på, leker orkan på kloden og jager livet op i hvitglød. Vi har jo i Europa ordet Amerikanisme, oldtiden hadde festina lente." ("Festina lente", 1928, 1965, 141).

and humanitarianism; moreover, he considers that America can teach the world the great community feeling (Næss, 1967, 307).

Hamsun depicted in *The Cultural Life of Modern America* a country dominated by materialism and self-sufficiency, where people are always in pursuit of fortune. Due to the strong subjectivity and the biased opinions he expressed there, most of them without proper argumentation, the book revealed a writer that looked at America with the eyes of an idealist, as Næss remarked: “Hamsun’s view of life was the view of an aesthete. To him the ideal society was one which displayed a special harmony resulting from mutual confidence, tolerance and graceful customs among its members.” (Næss, 1967, 312). Thus, full of disillusionment, he augmented all elements of the American society that he considered were not close to the ideal he had envisioned when he embarked for the New World. From the point of view of Hamsun’s literary production, this book marks the end of his literary apprenticeship that started with the articles published in the 1880s, his lectures in Minneapolis, and ended with *Sult* (*Hunger*), his literary breakthrough (Gordon Morgridge, 1969, xxxiii).

Young Hamsun struggled to become a writer at home and then emigrated to America to accomplish his dream, but he failed in accomplishing his dream of bringing poetry into the lives of Norwegian-Americans. He remained a wanderer, unable to adapt, but tempted to deeply criticise. However, America perpetually influenced his writing and his opinions on America disclose his desire to overcome the obstacles of a humble start in life and become part of “a deeply rooted European literary tradition” (Rasmussen, 2020, 319). Founded “upon the kind of deception that speaks of self-deception” (Sjølyst-Jackson, 2010, 18), *The Cultural Life of Modern America* needs to be interpreted in this key of utter subjectivity. Nevertheless, references to the Norwegian-Americans show his sympathy for their struggle. Despite this sympathy, the Norwegians in America regarded the book as an offense to their immigrant community and have refused for many years to acknowledge Hamsun’s value (Astrup Larsen, 1922, 30). Hamsun’s image of the immigrant could be considered, still, the least critical and biased of the opinions expressed in the book as they reveal the struggle of the immigrant to adjust, the costs of alienation and the loss of identity he needs to pay to become American.

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE EMERGING FROM HAMSUN'S SKETCHES

This subchapter will discuss two short stories that evoke Hamsun's American experience, "Rædsel" ("Fear")[71] and "Paa prærien" ("On the Prairie")[72], which appeared in 1903 in the volume *Kratskog: Historier og Skitser* ("Brushwood: Stories and Sketches"). Again, he evokes the image of America, one of his major themes (Næss, 1967, 306). These short stories are representative as they are reminiscences of the period Hamsun spent in Madelia, Minnesota, and the Dakota Territory, a time when he worked hard, struggling to earn enough money to fuel his writing ambitions. In addition, they appeared in a separate category of the volume, namely "Opplevede smaating", which translates as "Experienced Little Things", a further indicator that they are a genuine blend of reality and fiction.

Hamsun's image of America has been analysed from the perspective of the 'critic' as he presented it in *The Cultural Life of Modern America*, but the short stories leave a completely different impression, and this difference stems from the fact that Hamsun is a creative writer in this instance (Arestad, 1970, 153). As Hamsun's feelings towards America were complex and changed with time, they were expressed directly, through articles and various contemporaneous comments, but also indirectly, through his fiction (Current, 2003, 10). Hence, a discussion of these short stories is both necessary and useful since it provides a more personal approach to the American experience that completes the broader image of the Norwegian writer of the fascinating New World.

There is an air of nostalgia about these works, as Arestad observes, and they can be distinguished from the major texts Hamsun published in the 1890s. However, the fact that he chose to publish them in the period when he repudiated *The Cultural Life of Modern America* reveals Hamsun's belief that they had literary value, presenting a new look at America. The stories lack the subjective allegations of the America book, but they illustrate the

[71] In Sverre Arestad's translation published in "Hamsun and America", in *Norwegian-American Studies*, Volume 24, edited by Kenneth O. Bjork, Norwegian-American Historical Association, Northfield, Minnesota, 1970, pp. 167-172.
[72] In Richard Nelson Current's translation published in *Knut Hamsun Remembers America: Essays and Stories, 1885-1949*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia and London, 2003, pp. 72-79.

hardships of Hamsun's life as a worker in Minnesota and Dakota (Arestad, 1970, 153-154). Moreover, the short stories reflect Hamsun's main stops in his American periplus, strengthening the wanderer figure that would become symbolic for Hamsun's writing, and this idea is supported by Henk van der Liet, who considers that "the seeds for this special vagabond figure in the authorship were laid in the years that the migrant Hamsun travelled in vain back and forth across the Atlantic"[73] (van der Liet, 2020, 300).

Hamsun relates in "Fear" an episode from the period he spent in the Midwest, when he was working for Henry Johnston in Madelia, Minnesota, during his first American experience. Moreover, the short story tells the story of the Midwest workers, people living in an environment where struggle, disdain for human life and exploitation are part of the daily life. Hence, the story focuses on these men, rootles and wandering. Hamsun was aware that "rootlessness breeds lack of responsibility, disregard for law and order, and a seeming disdain for the dignity of man. And yet, while it appears that the law of the jungle rules life, there nevertheless emerges in his writings a kind of moral condemnation of evil." (Arestad, 1970, 154).

As previously mentioned, Hamsun was working at the lumber firm of his former teacher of English, Mr. Johnston, in Madelia, where he claims the notorious bandit Jesse James was captured and shot, but historical evidence points out the fact that the bandit had escaped, and only the Younger brothers, part of his gang, had been captured in Madelia. However, Hamsun confesses his bravery was put to a test when "Jesse James, America's most bloodthirsty and most powder-blackened bandit finally was captured and killed"[74] ("Fear", 1970, 166).

Johnston made a trip together with his wife in the East, so Hamsun had to manage the firm, selling the lumber during the day, while in the evening he was depositing the money in the bank. He evokes the way his days unfolded and minutely describes his failures in the kitchen. He would spend the night alone in the big house, without any neighbours in the proximity, as the house was situated a little further away from the town. Despite this, he writes he

[73] Own translation from Danish: "spiren til denne særlige vagabond-figuration i forfatterskabet blev lagt i de år, migranten Hamsun forgæves rejste frem og tilbage over Atlanten" (van der Liet, 2020, 300).

[74] Original text in Norwegian: "Jessie James, Amerikas blodtørstigste og mest krudtsværtede Røver, endelig blev greben og slaat ihjæl." ("Rædsel", 1903, 81).

did not feel afraid until one night when he arrived too late at the bank to deposit 700-800 dollars, the money he had made that day. It was the night "when I became seized by a hair-raising fear the like of which I neither before nor since have experienced. And for a long time afterwards I bore the mark of my experience that night."[75] ("Fear", 1970, 168), Hamsun recollects. As usual, he was writing late in the night when he heard a rustling at the kitchen door and realised there were people at the door. He resumed his writing after the noises stopped, but after half an hour he heard the front door was forced in. He then vividly describes his reactions to the situation he was finding himself in, the trembling of the heart, his legs even more so. Hamsun then grasped for Johnston's revolver and got bolder when he realised how heavy the door was and how difficult it would have been for anyone to force it. In his attempt to scare the unwanted visitors off, Hamsun shouted at them, but realised he had spoken in Norwegian, and he "saw the stupidity of that and repeated my threat in a loud voice in English."[76] ("Fear", 1970, 170). The natural impulse was to use his mother tongue in extreme situations, as it happened. Eventually, he got even more courageous and fired through the window the single bullet he had in the revolver, chasing the thieves, but remaining awake for the rest of the night.

The end of his short story reveals how he escaped the fearful event, but that the fear and terror lingered, as he had experienced something extraordinary that would leave marks on the young writer:

> But I have never been so afraid for my life as that night in the prairie town Madelia, Jesse James's place of refuge. It has happened to me a couple of times since when I have become frightened that my heart has beat right up in my throat and prevented my breathing. This remains from that night. I had never before known a fear that could manifest itself in this extraordinary manner.[77] ("Fear", 1970, 171).

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[75] Original text in Norwegian: "da jeg overfaldtes af en Rædsel saa haarrejsende som jeg hverken før eller siden har oplevet den. Og i lang Tid efterpaa havde jeg Men af denne Nats Oplevelse…" ("Rædsel", 1903, 85).

[76] Original text in Norwegian: "indsaa jeg det dumme heri og gentog med høj Røst min Trudsel paa Engelsk." ("Rædsel", 1903, 88).

[77] Original text in Norwegian: "Men saa ræd for mit Liv har jeg aldrig været som denne Nat i Præriebyen Madelia, Jessie James' Tilflugtssted. Det har ogsaa et Par Gange siden hændt naar jeg er bleven skræmt at mit Hjærtes Slag har virket lige op i min Hals og har hindret mit Aandedræt, – det har jeg fra hin Nat. Aldrig før havde jeg vidst af en Rædsel der kunde yttre sig paa denne overordentlige Maade." ("Rædsel", 1903, 88).

Our analysis will now focus on the other short story that has been selected, "On the Prairie", which was also published in the volume "Brushwood". This story unfolds itself in the Dakota Territory, where, according to Richard Nelson Current, Hamsun found most of his material for storytelling, although he spent more time in Wisconsin or Minnesota (Current, 2003, 72). Hamsun had been working in the summer and autumn of 1887 on Oliver Dalrymple's bonanza farm, in the flat and fertile Red River Valley, where these farms, which yielded good profits, were enormous and highly mechanized. Men were organized in teams, many employed in a single operation, worked long hours, receiving poor nourishment and low pay for their exhausting work. Hamsun worked in such conditions with other immigrants, particularly from Scandinavia, who were in desperate need of a job at the time (Current, 2003, 8-9).

Yet, in a letter he wrote to Kristofer Janson on the 17th of July 1887, soon after his arrival in Casselton, Dakota Territory, Hamsun compares Dakota with the Atlantic, just as Rølvaag compared the prairie with the sea:

> What a place Dakota is! Like an ocean. It makes the same impression on me as the Atlantic does – precisely. The wagons along the road seem to swim, the houses float. It is inconsolably monotonous. And then, working during the day, under the glaring hot sun, white, shimmering, cruelly hot. Not a cloud above. The wind is hot rather than warm. Not a shadow for miles around. Here and there, on the so-called tree claims there might be a bush. A melancholy sight.[78] ("Letter to Kristofer Janson", 1990, 62).

He then continues by describing the incredible heat that bathes the prairie, the mercilessly hot sun, the wind that doesn't cool, but brings additional heat, the branches of the bushes that stretch and beg "that rapacious heat on high for mercy", "a melancholy sight". However, Hamsun confesses that the sunsets in Dakota are like anything else: "But the sunsets are absolutely beyond compare. Never anywhere else than here in America have I seen the sun shimmering blood-red. Never in any painting, never in any poem. I do

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[78] Original text in Norwegian: "Fy for et Land dette Dakota! Som et hav. Det gjør paa mig samme indtryk som atlanteren – akkurat. Vogne utover veiene synes at svømme, huse at flyte. Det er trøstesløst ensformig. Og saa om dagen under arbeidet den stirrende, hete sol, hvit fraadende, saa grusom varm. Ikke en sky over os. Vinden er mere varm end lunken. Og der findes ikke en skygge i miles omkring. Paa de saakaldte træclaims staar hist og her en busk. Et sørgelig syn." ("Brev til Kristofer Janson", 1994, 75).

believe there are no words for it."[79] ("Letter to Kristofer Janson", 1990, 62-63). This is the setting where the short story "On the Prairie" occurs.

Hamsun's love for nature emerges from these descriptions, as his relation to nature, oftentimes in connection with the criticism of civilization and industrialization are essential traits of Hamsun's authorship (Wærp, 2018, 48). Newer research on Hamsun has shown his narratives in a different light, opening new perspectives and analysing them from the perspective of the ecological crisis caused by unprecedented levels of pollution worldwide. Hence, Hamsun's criticism of industrialization and mechanization, as well as his comments towards a society development that removes man from nature can be observed throughout his writing (Wærp, 2018, 50).

On the Dakota prairie, Hamsun recollects he was working with other fellow Norwegians, a Swede, ten or twelve Irishmen and some Americans as "the greenish yellow prairie stretched away as endlessly as a sea"[80] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 72). As mentioned previously, he often associates the prairie with the sea, an association that emerges also from Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. Moreover, Hamsun's descriptions of the nature surrounding them are intense, making use of alliteration to render the monotony of the prairie, which he views as devoid of life: "And no birds flew. No life could be seen, only the wheat billowing in the wind, and no sound was heard except for the eternal clacking and chirping of the grasshoppers, the prairie's only song."[81] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 72). He then proceeds to depict the difficult life these immigrants had as they were working sixteen hours a day in the heat that was so strong that it could burn the skin through a hole in the shirt, and they could only find shade if they hid under the wagon during their lunch break. Hamsun confesses that they never had a holiday, and "Sunday was just like Monday"[82] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 73). The toughest job was when the threshing of the wheat occurred, as "blizzard of dust, sand, and chaff arose

[79] Original text in Norwegian: "Men solnedgangen er absolut uten make. Jeg har aldrig andre steder end her i Amerika set noget rødt fraade saa blodig omkring solen. Aldrig paa et maleri, aldrig i et digt. Jeg tror overhodet ikke, der findes sprog for det." ("Brev til Kristofer Janson", 1994, 75).

[80] Original text in Norwegian: "Prærien laa grøngul og uendelig som et Hav." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 117).

[81] Original text in Norwegian: "Og ingen Fugle fløj, intet andet Liv saaes end Hvedens Bølgen i Vinden, og al den Lyd vi hørte var de evige Skrig fra Græshoppernes Millioner, – Præriens eneste Sang." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 118).

[82] Original text in Norwegian: "Søndag var som Mandag." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 119).

from all the blades and orifices of the machine"[83] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 74). Hamsun recollects an incident which involved the Swede, who was working hard and fast, forcing the writer to keep pace with him; as they were unloading the stacks of wheat, a snake slid into the Swede's boot, making him scream with terror.

Nevertheless, the harsh conditions in which these men worked made them express a certain solidarity, particularly at the end of the harvest, when they were all enthusiastic for having finished the hard labour that had drained their power throughout the summer. Hence, Hamsun describes their farewell party, with drinks and jolliness, emotional, too, as he discovered the cook was of Norwegian descent, but refused to acknowledge it because of "the Yankee's general contempt for Norwegians"[84] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 75), reflecting yet another of the difficulties faced by immigrants when they felt they were regarded differently because of their ethnicity, because of prejudices. The confession of the Norwegian cook continues with the expression of ethnic solidarity: "And therefore we must be good friends and partners as long as the Norwegian language flowed from our lips. The cook and I embraced, agreeing that our friendship would never end."[85] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 75). Moreover, this emotional episode, fuelled by the heavy drinking and the tiredness they all must have felt, made them all embrace, "hugging with their hardened arms and dancing around in their enthusiasm."[86] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 76).

Another immigrant figure is prominent in the sketch, Evans, the Irishman with silk shirts, that had been spending the past twelve years of his life harvesting on the prairie during the summer months, and cutting wood in the Wisconsin forests during the winter. When asked by Hamsun why he had chosen such a career, he answered with a long and elaborate exposition and uttered only one word: "Circumstances!"[87] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 76). This

[83] Original text in Norwegian: "Støv, Avner og Sand stod nemlig som et Snefog ud fra alle Maskinens Gab og Skovle." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 120).
[84] Original text in Norwegian: "Yankee'ernes almindelige Foragt for Nordmænd" ("Paa prærien", 1903, 124).
[85] Original text in Norwegian: "Og derfor skulde vi være gode Venner og *Partners,* saalænge norsk Tunge flød paa vore Læber.Kokken og jeg omarmed hin anden; aldrig skulde vort Venskab forgaa." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 124).
[86] Original text in Norwegian: "omarmed hinanden, vi trykked hinanden flade med vore hærdede Arme og dansed rundt med hverandre i Begejstring." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 124).
[87] Original text in Norwegian: "Omstændighederne!" ("Paa prærien", 1903, 126).

word carries all that needs not be spoken, and yet explains a lot, being representative for many of the immigrants, for the wanderers who meet at certain points in their lives and then part ways. However, another important episode is described, which speaks again of the brute reality these men were experiencing. As they were about to leave, the dismembered body of another Irishman, O'Brien, is carried in, for he had been run over by a wheat train, his legs cut off, meeting his fate in a violent way. His fellow Irishman, Evans, spends the night digging a hole for his grave and they all say farewell to O'Brien after having put him in a box, outside the town, with no prayers or singing. The Irishman's death reflects the fragility of the human being, particularly that of the wanderer, of the immigrant who has no one else by his side in the final moments, except for those with whom he had shared the most difficult days.

The story ends with a dose of sadness and nostalgia, as the men go each on his own. Evans, the wanderer that doesn't question the happenings in his life, is the one that continues on the same pathway, automatically, as this is the life he had chosen for himself:

> We scattered to the four winds. The man from Valdres bought a little shooting gallery in a Minnesota town, and the cook moved out West to the Pacific Coast. But Evans is, without doubt, still going around in his silk shirts and handing out money carelessly. Every summer he is out there on the prairie harvesting wheat, and every winter he is in the Wisconsin woods chopping timber. This is his life.
>
> That kind of life may be just as good as any other.[88] ("On the Prairie", 2003, 79).

Hamsun succeeds to relate film-like scenes without making any judgements, without expressing any critique towards his tough life as an immigrant worker on the prairie. "On the Prairie" concentrates in few pages many of the struggles of the European men that have tried their luck in America and ended up in the wilderness of the prairie. He only described here the life on

[88] Original text in Norwegian: "Vi spredtes for alle Vinde. Valdresen købte sig en liden Skydebane i en By i Minnesota, og Kokken drog vestover til Stillehavskysten. Men Evans gaar sikkerlig endnu omkring i sine Silkeskjorter og leverer Penge ud med rund Haand. Hver Sommer er han da paa Prærien og høster Hvede og hver Vinter ligger han inde i Wisconsins Skoge og hugger Favnved. Dette er nu hans Liv.
Et Liv der kanske er lige saa godt som noget andet." ("Paa prærien", 1903, 131).

the Dakota prairie as he saw it from the inside, without any moral judgement (Ferguson, 1987, 91), a life as good as any other.

Knut Hamsun, like many Norwegians in those days, was struggling with poverty and aspired to make his fortune in America in order to be able to live comfortably and achieve his dream of becoming a successful writer, "drawing on his personal experiences in America to enrich his literary work" (Conner, 2016, 183). His America short stories represent condensed life lessons from the wanderers that take life as it is. Moreover, they are important pieces in the puzzle that makes up Hamsun's complex image of America.

Preliminary Conclusions

Harald Beyer has drawn a map of Hamsun's life, referring to how the Norwegian author had tried everything, struggling and starving for years before being "catapulted" into literature for good. After being a shoemaker's apprentice, store clerk and road worker in the homeland, Hamsun embarked twice for America, where he worked as a streetcar conductor in Chicago, as a farmhand in Dakota and as a secretary and assistant to Kristofer Janson. He also delivered lectures in America and Norway, and published "a brazen little book misnamed *The Intellectual Life of Modern America (Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv, 1889)*", but what needs most of all to be remembered is that Hamsun's literary programme aimed at the renewal of the Norwegian literature, as the authors needed to focus more on the unconscious life of man, as the "literatures of ideas lacked a soul" (Beyer, 1979, 271-272). Beyer adds that Hamsun reacted against the social order and the ideas of progress and industrialization more violently than any of the writers of the 1890s, whereas his asocial and antidemocratic ideas were fuelled and reinforced by his hate for England and America, which eventually made him side with the Germans during the Second World War. However, he was "one of the greatest masters of style in Norwegian literature" that cannot be excluded from their literature (Beyer, 1979, 277) because of his political views.

Knut Hamsun was a migrant, a wanderer, and his articles and books deal with displacement and uprootedness. The difficult immigrant experience determined his overtly critical view of America, as an immediate effect, whereas the reflection of his American experience in his fiction is far less critical, depicting the beauty of American nature, while also highlighting the daily struggles in an immigrant's life.

His America voyages from 1882-1884 and 1886-1888 brought him disillusionment and influenced his perception of the New World, expressing his bitter criticism and disappointment in the lectures given at the University of Copenhagen that he eventually developed into his first published book, *The Cultural Life of Modern America* (Mureșan, "Norwegian emigration", 2020, 60). Thus, Hamsun described America as a country that considers itself superior to all others, a country that values fortune and profit above anything else. His view on America as it emerges from the book published in 1889 needs to be discussed bearing in mind his deception over his failure to bring poetry into the lives of Norwegian-Americans, since he comes with a bitterly critic and subjective approach, expressing biased opinions that are rarely grounded in his limited American experience. Moreover, due to his youthful ambition and impatience, as well as idealism, the spectacles with which he looks at America can be considered inappropriate. Hamsun grounded his account of America in his self-deception, in his inability to adjust to an environment that was very different from the one he had been living in the homeland. His bitter criticism is the criticism of the wanderer that struggles to find his place. As we can observe from a letter sent to his friend Sven Tveraas in 1882, while he was working for Kristofer Janson in Madelia, he admits to be discontent with his life in America: "Yet I am not very content. God knows I suffer under a life like this. I feel so infinitely remote from people – torn away from everything. I am melancholy to a degree."[89] ("Letter to Sven Tveraas", 1990, 45).

However, Hamsun's account of America is written in a brilliant style, providing amusing examples, but it also abounds in trivial observations and comments (Næss, 1967, 311) and marks the end of his literary apprenticeship, before the publication of his first novel, *Hunger*, in 1890. Moreover, his views on America evolved with time, disclosing both vehement opposition and compassion, as well as distrust for the noise, for the rapid pace of American life (Rasmussen, 2020, 324). In his vivid comments, the image of the immigrant emerges as less critical and biased, reflecting his struggle to adapt to a new cultural environment, but also his loss of identity and belonging, his oscillation between two worlds.

[89] Original text in Norwegian: "Jeg finder mig dog ikke tilfreds. Gud skal vide jeg lider under et sligt Liv som dette. Jeg føler mig saa uendelig fjærn fra alle Mennesker – saa løsrevet fra alt. Jeg er i den Grad tungsindt." ("Brev til Sven Tveraas", 1994, 45).

Hamsun's short stories, of which "Fear" and "On the Prairie" have been selected, complete his view on America, providing raw instances of immigrant life in America from the insider's perspective, without expressing judgemental opinions or criticism. The episodes reveal unusual situations for a wanderer coming from the Old World, focusing on the harshness of life in the Midwest and Dakota Territory in the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the America sketches testify to the struggles and poverty endured by the aspiring writer, displaying the effect of his personal experiences on his literary work. As they present life in the Midwest and the Dakota prairie as Hamsun saw it, these texts are important for a complete image of America seen with Hamsun's eyes and spectacles.

Finally, despite the controversial political partisanships Hamsun has taken because of his unflinching conservative look on life, his writing, as Tom Conner observed, is "far more interesting and of more lasting value than his misguided politics" (Conner, 2016, 201). America remained a central theme in his authorship, providing the framework for the wanderer figure that permeates all his texts, a testimony of the troubled years of Knut Hamsun's youth.

CHAPTER 5
ANIȘOARA STAN
AND HER DEDICATION TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE ROMANIAN FOLKLORE AND IDENTITY

The final chapter of this book provides a Romanian-American perspective upon immigration by focusing on Anișoara Stan's autobiography *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947). After a short introduction on the author's biography, deeply intertwined with her authorship, the focus will shift to her American experience, to her dream of making all Americans appreciate the Romanian folk art. The second part will discuss her visionary proposal of founding a global ethnographic museum in the United States of America with the purpose of celebrating the diversity of the American immigrants for a better understanding of the specificities of each ethnic group, an understanding that can foster ethnic tolerance and lasting peace.

There were several Romanian-American writers who described their emigration experiences. The first important writer was Peter Neagoe, who emigrated to America in 1906 and wrote about the peasant life in his Transylvanian boyhood village in novels such as *Easter Sun* (1934) or *There Is My Heart* (1936). Born in a wealthy family, Neagoe studied arts in Bucharest with Constantin Brâncuși, the most famous Romanian sculptor, with whom he would reunite during his stay in Paris in the 1920s, while other important writers such as James Joyce, Gertrude Stein or Ezra Pund were also close acquaintances. Mircea Vasiliu went to America in 1946, as a diplomat, but after the installation of the communist regime in Romania, decided to remain in the United States. He became a prolific illustrator and published *The Pleasure Is Mine* (1955) and *Which Way to the Melting Pot?* (1963), in which he describes his life as an immigrant. Other writers such as Eugene C. Teodorescu, Eli Popa or Ion Cârja also wrote about their immigrant experiences.

However, Anișoara Stan's story reveals a naivety and sensibility that is difficult to overlook. Her account of her immigrant life is important to analyse as she came from a Transylvanian family, like the large majority of the Romanians in America, with roots in the rural world. Moreover, her work as a folklorist and her writings had the same goal as Rølvaag's narratives: to draw the attention upon the importance of preserving the homeland cultural heritage, considered as beneficial during the process of acculturation. Lastly, her perspective as a woman completes the broader image on immigration that was largely shaped by male writers. Yet, her contribution to the building of the Romanian-American community is hardly mentioned, although she dedicated her life to the promotion of the Romanian folk art in the United States. The discussion on her authorship into the larger context of migration literature is an attempt to restore her rightful place in the gallery of notable Romanian-Americans.

The existing literature on Stan's life and works is extremely reduced, she seems to have been almost completely forgotten, but she deserves to be given more attention. Perhaps her writing is not the most valuable, but the tremendous effort she put into promoting the Romanian traditions all over the United States needs to be acknowledged. Hence, she was first mentioned in a review of *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* published in the summer of 1948 by Henry C. Tracy in the literary magazine *Common Ground*, the collection «The Bookshelf» of several book reviews grouped under the title "Backgrounds and Frontiers of Human History". The prestigious magazine had Louis Adamic and Thomas Mann in the editorial board, whereas Eleanor Roosevelt and the Norwegian writer Sigrid Undset were among the notable contributors. The review appreciates Stan's depiction of peasant life and rural values, as well as her idea that folk arts are the heart of a people. Previously, Stan's name had appeared in 1935 in *The Evening Star*, in Washington, in *The Detroit Free Press* (1942, 1944), *The Minneapolis Star* (1943), *The San Francisco Examiner* (1944), or *The Chicago Tribune* (1948). Vladimir Wertsman highlights the important role played by Anișoara Stan in the promotion of the Romanian folk art in the 1930s and 1940s, and makes reference to her book, which dealt with reminiscences of native places in Romania and described interesting episodes in the life of the Romanian-American communities (Wertsman, 1975, 9, 17), whereas Theodore Andrica writes about her important collection of folk art pieces that had been donated to the ethnographic museum of St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Cleveland

(Andrica, 1977, 91). Henderson and Olasiji mention several outstanding Romanian-American writers, including Stan, referring to the way she became well known as folklorist in their study on ethnic groups in America (Henderson & Olasiji, 1995, 145-146). In addition, Radu Toma refers to Stan's contribution in his complex book on Romanians in America, while Joanne Bock provides one of the most detailed portraits of Stan in her book on the Romanian-American inheritance, published in 1997. More recently, Aurel Sasu mentions her only in excerpts related to the ethnographic events she had organized (Romanian Art in America, San Francisco, 1937; exhibition, 1934) and fails to mention her in the chapters dedicated to literature or culinary art (Sasu, 2003, 94). Anca-Luminița Iancu also makes reference to Stan in her Ph.D. dissertation on the literary practices of non-English-speaking European-American immigrant women. Vladimir Bulat brings Anișoara's contribution into discussion in an article published in *Observator cultural* ("The Cultural Observer") in 2012 and begins by emphasizing the precarious state of the Romanian emigration history.

Anișoara Stan became known in America due to the many folk art exhibitions she organized and to the Romanian cook book she published in 1951, but her immigrant experience was minutely described in the autobiography she published in 1947, a book that contains vivid descriptions of a brightly coloured homeland that glorifies a close relation to nature. *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* remained obscure, a volume that most people never heard about, confirming, as Vladimir Bulat observes, the lack of interest for the fate of those who lived and worked for the traditional Romanian values (Bulat, 2012). Yet, the book is relevant for this analysis of the quest of identity as it is autobiographic, and it describes the struggles of preserving one's identity not with the purpose of distinctiveness or isolation from the other ethnic groups in America, but with the purpose of embracing the differences and specificities of the many nations in order to bring cohesion within the wider American society.

Anișoara Stan's Life

Anișoara Stan (1902-1954) is not necessarily a typical Romanian immigrant in America, although she did have her share of struggles in America. She was born in 1902 in Cluj, in a well-off Romanian family in Transylvania under Austro-Hungarian rule. We learn from her autobiography that she spent much of her childhood at her grandparents' house in Gilău, a village not far

from Cluj, where she learned to appreciate the peasant life, the values and traditions that helped them endure hardships, among which the hardest was the impossibility to freely speak their mother tongue in their own country. After the Kingdom of Romania enters the First World War, in 1916, she is imprisoned (which is, indeed, difficult to understand), but returns to her family after six months and discovers the degraded condition they are all to be found in. In 1918, once the Unification of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania takes place, Stan enjoys better times with her family, continues her studies and works as a secretary. All this time, her passion for the Romanian folk art, for the traditional costumes that even her mother sewed, determines her to collect numerous pieces. A fortunate encounter with Queen Marie of Romania occurs, and the Queen seems to have been fascinated by her love for the peasant art, which eventually leads to the decision to emigrate to the New World. With the intention to promote the authentic Romanian traditional folk art in America, Anișoara Stan emigrated together with her sister in 1922, the year when the first book on Romanian-Americans was published by Șerban Drutzu in Chicago (Wertsman, 1975, 8). She started tours throughout the vast expanses of the US, with the help of the Romanian-American communities, to showcase the Romanian folk heritage. She also worked as secretary and as translator in order to support herself. Before returning home to bring more pieces to her folk art collection, she met an American, Joseph Rubin, whom she eventually married. Rubin would support her in all her endeavours throughout their life together.

Anișoara Stan intended to temporarily emigrate to America to ease her family's economic situation, but also to valorise the traditional folk art of her country, being determined to show that each of the peoples that make up America has a cultural heritage that is worth known and that can be used to bring cohesion and tolerance to a culturally-diverse environment. She eventually never returned to the homeland, and wrote an autobiography that tells the story of a Romanian girl to the American people. Unlike Rølvaag, who wrote in Norwegian and later translated some of his books into English, or Hamsun, who also wrote in Norwegian and did not even intend to translate his America book into English, Stan wrote in English for the American public with the intention to make her immigrant experience known by her fellow Americans. For that she also travelled the vast country organizing exhibitions, becoming acquainted with the Romanian communities all across the United States, but also with American

intellectuals and officials that would support her work. She dedicated her life to the study and collection of folk art, and her consistent collection of costumes, embroidery, carved wood objects or paintings she had gathered was donated to the Ethnographic Museum of St. Mary Orthodox Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Stan died in 1954 without having accomplished her dream of establishing a global ethnographic museum in which all important cultures would be showcased not under glass, but through events that would bring the traditional pieces to life for the benefit of all American ethnic groups.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A DREAMER

They Crossed Mountains and Oceans is an autobiography that reveals another perspective on immigration, seemingly written by the Romanian immigrant writer for the American audience to make them acquainted with the homeland culture of the author. As previously stated, researchers on immigrant experience have too often focused on statistics, census data, different types of records, neglecting fiction and autobiography, resources that are valuable for the insights into an immigrant's life. However, these two resources demand creativity in their use, yet, their value is too great to be ignored (Weinberg, 1976, 409-410). Anișoara Stan's autobiography is listed, along with Konrad Bercovici's *It's the Gipsy in Me* and Ole Edvart Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth* in a selection of novels and autobiographies on the immigrant experience (Weinberg, 1976, 430, 431). The book describes her life from the age of fourteen until its publication, in 1947. There is no intention to check its verity, but to highlight the elements that provide its specificity, to get a glimpse into the immigrant experience of a Romanian woman who emigrated, unlike most other women who followed their husbands across the ocean, "in pursuit of a Romanian-American dream" (Iancu, 2009, 1). Dedicated "To the American People, Immigrants All", she reveals from the very beginning of the book her perspective on the contribution of the immigrants to the American society and culture.

Anișoara, a young Transylvanian woman, defies the times and fights like a man for the preservation of her Romanian heritage. However, despite her work – which can be compared to that of missionaries –, she is hardly mentioned among Romanian-Americans, her work being barely known among few confined circles. Accounts about her reveal her love for her

homeland and her struggle to raise awareness about the importance of preserving the cultural heritage:

> She felt that she had a mission, and she came with the thought that she was going to make the Romanian art known, as far as the country is concerned. She had a great love for her country, and I think she was very sincere and believed in the cultural background that Romania had offered to her and she wanted others to become knowledgeable about this. She had quite a drive, and she was a very industrious person and very dedicated in trying to promote the good qualities … of the culture. (Leona Barbu, Bock, 1997, 78).

Stan was a dreamer, and her autobiography testifies for her efforts to bring joy among the Romanian-Americans, to remind them about the treasures that they had left in the homeland, contributing in this way to a more cohesive community of Romanians in the United States. Nevertheless, to the longing for the homeland or the hardships endured by immigrants, Iorga added the bitterness felt by the mothers when seeing their children barely speak some Romanian, "our songs fly from the lips of the children who can barely answer in Romanian, the feet used to other types of dances sketch Romanian horas, and the mothers' eyes are filled with tears. *Everything is in vain; we shall lose them*, a priest's voice speaks with grief, and there is a bitter truth in this saying."[90] (Iorga, 1930, 84). This sad truth is also acknowledged by Joanne Bock, who observes how Stan had gone to America to make the Romanian artistic tradition known, but how the immigrants were many times too preoccupied by their struggle to appreciate the folk art or to familiarize their children to their homeland heritage (Bock, 1997, 77-78). Yet, there is a strong desire in Stan to preserve the identity of her people, and to acquaint Americans with her culture, which fuels her numerous voyages from New York to Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul, Philadelphia, San Francisco, where she organizes numerous exhibitions with her dowry, the collection of traditional pieces of clothing and folk art she and her sister Florica had received from their mother.

The first part of the autobiography focuses on the homeland, depicting her war experience as a teenager, the family ties, life in Transylvania, with

[90] Own translation from Romanian: "din buzele copilărești care abia știu răspunde românește, zboară cântările noastre, picioarele deprinse cu alte danțuri schițează horele românești, și ochii mamelor se umplu de lacrimi. *Totul e în zădar; o să-i pierdem*, spune îndurerat un glas de preot, și este un trist adevăr în această rostire." (Iorga, 1930, 84).

detailed accounts of peasant life, while the second part is dedicated to her immigrant experience, focusing on her adjustment to a new culture and on her struggles to make the Romanian folk art known all across America. Hence, it begins with a description of the Assumption Day morning ("Adormirea Maicii Domnului", "Ziua de Sfânta Maria"), her mother's name day, 1916, when Anișoara (14) and her sister Florica were taken to their grandmother in Gilău, because of the recent events in Transylvania during the First World War. She describes the scent of the flowers that greeted her in the morning, showing her love for nature, then the childhood house, how they had a vegetable garden, three cows and chickens. One can almost feel the scent of the geraniums hanging on the window sill of Anișoara Stan's childhood house, as her descriptions are vivid, full of emotion, revealing her sensitivity and naivety. There is a personal touch that permeates the text, oftentimes childish, yet sincere and captivating.

Anișoara constantly explains different Romanian habits, such as the children not being allowed to listen or interfere in family discussions, as the worries could not confuse children. She then describes the voyage to Gilău, to her grandparents, and how they were joined by their three younger cousins. Upon their arrival in Gilău, they are waited by all the children of her grandmother's neighbours, with whom they play and dance folk dances. The Hungarian gendarmes search the house in the middle of the night as Romania had declared war to Austria-Hungary. Her uncle and Anișoara herself, accompanied by her aunt Anica, are being taken by the gendarmes, while he was never to be seen again. Furthermore, Stan offers a short briefing on Transylvania's situation at the time, discussing how Romania's entering the war would shape its history. She also describes the oppression against the Romanians in Transylvania, admitting that "oppressed peoples learn to say things without words, with a nod or a glance. As young as we were, we too knew that language."[91] (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 11).

Nature is an important element of her Romanian identity, and her descriptions of nature disclose the intricate connection between herself and the natural environment, as if it could partake to her difficult situation. Stan also presents the peasants, whom she almost glorifies, in full harmony with nature, and she seems to make efforts to demonstrate she is part of their

[91] Hereafter, all of Stan's works will be cited by providing the title of the work, the year and pages.

community, seeking for their appreciation and approval, as she admits when waiting at the notary to decide her fate and discusses with her aunt and Badea Gligor, the drummer of the village:

> Again I felt very important. I was part of these plain people. Like the Negro slaves who put into their spirituals words of hope, courage and defiance, which they dared not otherwise use, our peasants also had a secret code expressed by words having meaning only for us and in our folk songs. I became gay. I understood their hidden language. I was now a part of my people. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 16).

The episode of her six-month incarceration in Fellegvar (Cetățuia), on the Fortress Hill in Cluj, together with other women and men, both intellectuals and peasants, sets its print on Stan's fate. She is questioned by the Hungarian authorities and moved to a better room after meeting a general who recognizes her. She notices how people are being taken away every day and learns they had been taken to concentration camp in Veperd Sopron Megye, in Hungary. Before being freed, she makes a vow that would stand at the basis for her struggle of building a world ethnographic museum:

> I, Anișoara Stan, promise in front of our Lord, God, that as long as I live, I will be human and humble and try to bring people together, so help me God! Because in here, in this most inhumane place, in suffering and in pain, we were all alike. The same mouths, the same functions and the same flesh. And do you know what? Even now I am very much ashamed of myself, when I think how dignified and brave were the lowly peasants and how miserably I had acted. It is true they were more used to need, suffering and humiliation, as they had been stepped on for centuries. But oppression had not made them cringing. They retained their dignity as human beings. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 27).

Despite the rather pathetic tone of the vow, it discloses her close connection to God, and how her faith helps her cope with the difficulties of immigrant life. As in other instances, Anișoara Stan reveals her deep religiosity: "A merciful God shields our eyes and spares us a sight into the future." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 19).

Throughout the book, the particular events she describes offer her the opportunity to present the rituals and traditions specific to Transylvania, such as the case of her grandmother's death, which allows for thorough depictions of the funeral rituals. Stan sometimes delves into minute

descriptions of places or objects, rendering the text rather difficult to follow. This can be partly explained by the purpose of this book, which seems to have been written for the American audience, and by her desire to provide as many detailed descriptions of the Romanian traditions as possible.

Her story continues with descriptions of the very difficult times that follow the summer of 1917, when people were struggling to survive, and rumours come that the Romanian occupation army had started to advance into Transylvania, making the Hungarians scared for their lives. Eventually, the liberation day comes, 24^{th} of December, 1918, a memorable time for all the Romanians who, Stan says, gathered in Piața Unirii ("Union Square") to celebrate the unification with Romania, without showing the slightest sign of vengeance towards the Hungarians.

Eventually, her father returns home from the battlefront, and the family is reunited. Upon recollecting the emotions experienced at the time, she admits being too sensitive: "Even today, if anything stirs me deeply, I am liable to embrace people, and to be looked upon as being crazy, because here in America it is the style to hide one's emotions." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 50).

The end of the war is important for Stan and her family also because they were allowed to display, without recrimination, their embroideries and artefacts as important elements of their culture (Bock, 1997, 78). They regain the family collection of folk arts and crafts, costumes and handiwork from a family that had sheltered them during the war, and Anișoara values greatly the treasure. Her mother divided it into two parts, one for each girl, as their dowry. Further on, Stan speaks of the goods sent by the Romanian-Americans and the American Red Cross, to help people after the war:

> I wish the American people could have understood Romanian only for a day and listened in to us. What excitement! What gratitude! The people prayed to God and all the saints for the kind-hearted American people, to forgive them all their sins, both great and little, and to wash them off from their list of transgressions. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 55).

Her character is revealed in the high expectations the Romanians in Transylvania had after the war: "How wonderful it was to build castles in the air, but to me they were very real." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*,

1947, 57). Nevertheless, the economic situation was not improving, she, like all the others, was working hard to secure clothing and food. The promised aid from the authorities fails to appear, taxes began to be collected again, putting pressure on the people.

However, an important event follows, as Anișoara is invited by her aunt to attend the reception organized in Cluj for the Royal family, and meet the Queen. She attends the event in a peasant costume. She mentions briefly how she was introduced to the royal family, and how Queen Marie had spoken to her for a little while (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 58). This event would shape her future, as her decision to emigrate to America was taken – according to her autobiography – at Queen Marie's proposal. The peasant costume is the link between her homeland and her life in America, after she decided to emigrate in order to promote the Romanian folk art in the United States. Another important event in her life is Stan's meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1933, which leaves a deep impression on Anișoara and allows her to offer the First Lady a Romanian folk costume, showing her how beautiful folk art can be (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 230). A year later, in December 1934, Eleanor Roosevelt wore the gown at a costume party she organised for 500 guests, an event which sparked great interest, as many newspapers, including The New York Times, said: "Mrs. Roosevelt as A Rumanian. Mrs. Roosevelt, wearing a Rumanian peasant costume, received alone at the head of the grand stairway." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 234). The Romanian-American community found great pride in this token of respect for their folk art.

The story continues with a visit Stan and her sister pay to their aunt and uncle in Bucharest, Romania's capital, and the return provides a good occasion for stressing her strong ties to her family, which would also be evoked during her American years:

> It is good to visit far away places, but grand though they may be, they can never give you that inner joy which comes from one's own home, where each familiar corner is tied to a memory and the smells of mother's cooking are more wonderful even than the ones coming from the royal kitchen. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 81).

From now on, good news from America continue to come to Cluj, either through visits of family friends that had emigrated, through newspapers or

letters: "The tales he told about America were like a fairy tale come true. […] I became inwardly joyous and a dream started to form in my mind." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 83, 84). At the same time, the family was struggling to survive, and Anișoara became more open to solutions for making a better living. Despite hearing that America is no place for intellectuals, she eventually decides to try her luck in the New World:

> All of a sudden it came to me. Why, of course, I have my dowry, and hadn't mother told me I could do what I wanted with it? So why not take the work with me to the new world? This would give me the opportunity to show to the Americans the beautiful folk arts of our beloved people. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 84).

Reference to the title of her autobiography is made during a discussion with the Orthodox Bishop Nicolae Ivan in Cluj, an acquaintance of her father. The Bishop told Stan about the difficult, yet positive experience of the thousands of Transylvanian peasants that had emigrated to America:

> Our beloved *Țărani*, peasants, have gone to far-away lands and crossed mountains and endless oceans but finally found an end to their wanderings. They left as they couldn't stand the oppression and the misery of their loved ones. […] These people, so courageous and clean and God-fearing, ventured into an unknown world and prospered. They paid out all their debts, they bought lands and property and sent their children to schools. It was not easy what they did. No one in his right mind leaves his parental home and land of his fathers unless misery pushes him out. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 99).

Full of high expectations, young Anișoara parts with her mother and father, and their image remains imprinted in her mind as the train leaves the station: "Now we gave way to our tears. As the train picked up speed we said goodbye with all our hearts to Cluj, to our dear Romanian people, to the station and to everything else we could think of." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 103). Her book continues with a brief history of Romania, with facts about the geography, history, people, culture, etc. She focuses more on Transylvania, dedicating a few lines to the figure of Iuliu Maniu, the political leader that fought for unification and for the welfare of the peasants. Her descriptions betray her hopes for a better future for her homeland: "As the people are becoming more conscious of their rights the arbitrary political methods of the past will have to disappear and give way to more democracy

in government and an easier life for the people." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 110).

Furthermore, Stan draws a characterisation of the Romanian people, emphasizing their love of God and family, but also their deep attachment to the land, which is essential to them and gains the respect of the other members of their community: "No matter how poor a man may be he and every member of his family will save every penny until they have enough to buy a piece of land." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 120). Again, the relationship of the peasants with nature is highlighted: "Nature and necessity were their teachers. They are primitive but there is a wisdom and beauty in their primitive instruments.". Moreover, she depicts them as simple, even naïve, generous and patient, as they "do not rush like mad, but walk with a swinging gait and rhythmic steps, thinking about their obstacles and how to overcome them." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 131). Stan continues by making connections between the peasants' character and their traditions and folk art, revealing how their art "is distinguished by harmony and balance, excellent proportion and economy of line, and a profound wisdom and originality in combining colours and patterns." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 132). Aside from its functional and aesthetic role, folk art is an essential part of their heritage, a marker of their identity, and, an immigrant mother that treasures the handiwork from her homeland to see her children's disinterest towards these precious items cannot but feel a little ashamed and sad at the same time. Reminiscences of the Old World, they reveal the conflict between the first-generation immigrants, who understand the importance of their cultural heritage, and their children, who feel that their parents belong to another world and refuse to share their appreciation for these old and forgotten items.

As Anișoara embarks on her life-changing voyage, she reflects on the role of smaller nations within the wider global context:

> We are living in a world that worships bigness. The great powers are now sitting down to decide the fate of the world, and the voice of small peoples is ignored in their councils. But the little nations are important. They have given and will continue to give to the world values which the mighty, materialistically drunk nations can never give. Not able to rely on their material strength, they have striven to attain mental and spiritual excellence. We on the contrary have become steadily more

> selfish and morally indifferent. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 104).

Her perspective is similar to Hamsun's perception regarding the monopoly of greater nations, such as America, revealing at the same time her criticism of materialism, although she strives to highlight the values with which less prominent nations contribute to the world. She argues that the spiritual values of the smaller nations are far more valuable than the material strength of the larger nations.

After 24 days on the ocean, Anișoara arrives in New York. As millions of immigrants before her, Anișoara Stan is impressed by the Statue of Liberty, which she perceives as a protective figure that welcomed the tired, the poor, the huddled masses who are yearning to breathe free that Emma Lazarus described in her sonnet dedicated to the American symbol of freedom and openness. Candidly, like a child, Stan describes how they were greeted by the great statue:

> When we reached the great *Lady* with the outstretched hand holding the eternal torch of liberty, we thought it was meant for us and involuntarily stretched out our hands to her to return her gracious welcome. And when we were close to her – please believe me it is the truth – we said in the Romanian language '*Bine team* [sic][92] *gasit frumoasa* – It is good we found you, beautiful Lady of Liberty.' We thanked God for our good luck and safe arrival." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 161).

The same deep impression would be shared by the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, who visited the United States in 1930 with the support of the Romanian-American community:

> Arisen from the mist in front of the great human wave, she stands straight and orders with the imperative of a gesture of salvation. Regardless of the opinions about its values, and criticisms on the account of its proportions, she possesses the advantage of proclaiming a moral concept, one of the most seducing and noble ideas … able to

[92] There is a spelling mistake in the original text, the correct spelling would be "te-am".

> mobilize energies from all corners of the world.[93] (Iorga, cited and translated by Wertsman, 2011, 61).

The Statue of Liberty in New York is a symbol of American freedom, which Anișoara overtly appreciates in the epigraph of her autobiography:

> I love my country of birth
> It gave me life, vision, my creative ability
> For my ancestors' blood courses through my veins
>
> I love America
> The country of my free adoption
> It gave me not only the continuation of life, new vision and the opportunity for creation
> It embodies all the freedoms. (Epigraph, *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947).

Thus, the first part of the poem is dedicated to her homeland, from whence her life and creativity stem, whereas the following verses reveal her love for the land she had chosen as her adoptive country, a land that gave her new vision, the opportunity to create, a land that embodies all the freedoms. The epigraph is relevant for it illustrates the first-immigrants' desire to reconcile the two worlds they are oscillating between, namely the one they inhabit physically – the new world – and the Old World, which they inhabit emotionally and culturally (Iancu, 2011, 1).

When she first catches a glimpse of the American soil, she is struck, as Hamsun had been in 1884, by the traffic, the many people on the street, the lack of vegetation:

> Oh, God, I exclaimed. Where are we, this can't be New York.
>
> Yes, it is New York all right. What's wrong?
>
> Nothing is wrong, but we expected a beautiful new world, a place of places, a little like what we picture heaven to be like. I thought we would

[93] Original text in Romanian: "Răsărind din ceață în fata imensului roiu omenesc, dreaptă, poruncitoare, cu imperativul gestului izbăvitor, ea impresionează. Oricum i s'ar judeca valoarea și oricât i s'ar critica proporțiile, ea are avantagiul de a pune în fața laboratoriului de muncă, haosului de afaceri, un concept moral, unul din cele mai seducătoare și mai nobile ideale și afirmația mândră a principiului generator pentru această societate, chemată, cu trambița mobilisării tuturor energiilor, din toate colțurile lumii." (Iorga, 1930, 14).

> step from the boat into a fairy-tale scene and here we are with not even one tree, no greens, no flowers.
>
> I was let down. A dream was shattered and I felt sick inside of me. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 164).

However, with the help of the Romanians they meet, who make sure the girls have a pleasant stay, they say goodbye to the "babel of so many tongues" (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 176) and then go to Detroit, the city that transformed numerous hard-working Romanian peasants into labourers for the large American car factories. The interaction with the Romanian-Americans allows them to see the difficult conditions in which they work and live, augmented by the homesickness: "Even harder as their hearts are torn to pieces and full of longing for their loved ones left behind." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 181). They can also observe the peaceful cohabitation between Romanians and other nationalities, who are separated only by their language.

Anișoara's immigrant experience was deeply linked to the Romanian-American community, as she benefitted from the support of many Romanians who appreciated her struggle to preserve and promote the folk art that reminded them of the homeland and of their family. Their first exhibition makes the strongest impression on a fellow Romanian from Gilău, the village of her grandparents: "You made me very happy for the first time since I arrived in America. I found peace with my God and my soul. God bless you and your whole family." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 186).

As she travels the vast corners of the United States, Stan has the chance to see the harsh life of the immigrants who needed to work all day to accomplish their dreams. Her visionary perspective that focuses on the similarities between the many nationalities of the immigrants is essential, revealing a keen understanding of the struggles that all of them experienced:

> Oh, yes, we found out how they live and how hard they work, these blessed immigrants. No matter where they come from, to matter what is their nationality, their struggle is the same and their reasons are the same. They came here with the same purpose and the same dream, first to be free of oppression, then to make a better living for themselves and

> those dear to their hearts back home. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 197-198).

Anișoara Stan's struggle was slightly different, as she did not work hard in factories, but worked hard to get people interested in the Romanian folk art, to convince them to visit the exhibitions, to raise awareness among other immigrant groups, "to see the work other nations had produced, to admire it and also observe how similar it is to their own and how much alike people really are." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 207). These were her thoughts as she put all her efforts into founding a folklore museum in Cleveland, Ohio, which was supposed to exhibit pieces of clothing, folk art, etc. from the numerous nations that found home in the USA. An idealistic mind, Stan envisioned a space that would highlight the similarities between peoples, that would shelter the specificity of traditional works as parts of the larger heritage that America would become.

After visiting the homeland and collecting more folk pieces, Stan organizes new exhibitions. The first one takes place in Southampton, Long Island gallery, under the patronage of Nicolae Iorga, prime minister, who was visiting America and the Romanian communities in America at the time. Later on, in 1932, she is involved in a larger exhibition, and afterwards in the organization of the Folk Festival Carnival of New York, where 60 countries of origin were represented: "What we were doing was a very significant thing. We were bringing together people who were brought up each with a different language and culture, making friendships and showing they could work together cooperatively and in peace. Only in America could such a thing occur." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 227). Giving credit to her adoptive country, Stan emphasizes the importance of her work and how it enhanced cohesion among the many immigrant groups.

America is also the country in which prejudices regarding gender were not to be found, especially if we recollect Rølvaag's shock when seeing that men were milking the cows in America, an activity that was performed only by women in Norway. Yet, one of the Romanians in America speaks for the mentality of the time in what concerns the involvement of women:

> All that you say is the truth, he said. I am fighting for the same things as you and what is the result? Give up, young lady, give up, go home and stay home, attend to your cooking and to your husband. Why does he

> let you go like that? If I were him, I would not. Go home and wash dishes. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 294).

Nevertheless, Stan constantly strives for achieving her goal, for organising exhibitions and events that bring together Romanians and other nations. She attracts them by stressing the importance of these folk elements in an immigrant's life, as are part of their identity: "living memories of your carefree childhood days, and bring your friends and especially the Americans, and be proud to show them your work, your mother's work and your grandmother's work, then bring your children so they can see who you are." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 297).

Several elements of immigrant identity emerge from Anișoara Stan's autobiography: the relation with nature, which is central for the Romanian peasant, the harmonious rural life, the traditional costumes and pieces of arts and crafts, their community spirit, as well as family and food, as her passion for the traditional dishes would later be described in the Romanian cook book she published in 1951. Hence, the relation with nature is completed by her relation with food, which she considers a means by which people can be brought together. Food is a universal language, and America provides the perfect environment for learning about different cultures even through the various cuisines:

> It is more than ever important in our troubled world for peoples of different countries to understand and know each other. And what better way is there to bring people together than through food? [...] Since America is unique in that so many of its citizens have a foreign heritage, it is fitting that the American people who have extended their hands in welcome to the immigrants and who have accorded them all the privileges of living in this democratic nation should have the opportunity to know the culture of their fellow citizens; and cooking is an important part of folk culture. ("Introduction", 1951, x).

Moreover, Anișoara Stan never lost the connection to her homeland because of the traditional arts and crafts she cherished, and, through hard work, she dedicated her life to a different kind of pioneer work: teaching people to embrace diversity and to cherish their their homeland culture.

THE VISIONARY PROJECT OF A WORLD MUSEUM OF PEASANT ART

This subchapter discusses Anișoara Stan's project of a global ethnographic museum in which all nations would be represented with the purpose of making their cultures known. Knowledge about the other cultures, Stan considers, fosters tolerance, understanding and peace, a visionary idea at the time, that is highly circulated today and that still captivates people.

The dream of a place where people of all cultures could feel free to express their cultural identity emerged already from the period when she was held incarcerated during the First World War. She then realized – as she was living in Transylvania, a multi-ethnic region –, that there were few differences between peasants with different ethnic backgrounds. The idea of an outdoor ethnographic museum where different cultures could display their traditions, living in harmony, began to grow in her mind, and her dream inspired Stan to pass on the Romanian folk art tradition both to Romanians in America and to Americans (Bock, 1997, 78-79).

The dream starts to coagulate when Anișoara Stan mentions in *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* how she continues her work as folklorist, goes to different villages in Romania, in the Apuseni Mountains, where she learns different folk dances, then to Făgăraș region, in villages such as Drăguș, which had many immigrants who had returned from America. At the same time, Stan begins making plans for founding a live museum of peasant art, with villages of all the countries, a live museum, not a classic museum, with the objects protected by glass. As she shares her idea with the others, she faces reluctance and opposition: "I spoke to many people about this, but they didn't seem to understand. I was called crazy. I wasn't sure of that but I did know I was stubborn. If they couldn't see it here, maybe they will in Europe." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 216). Yet, Stan dit not renounce her dream and strived all her life to accomplish it.

Although she is looked at with suspicion and reluctance, Anișoara Stan perseveres in her determination to see her dream accomplished, as an outdoor museum of villages of all peoples would be an important step towards bringing different nations together, as "to this day the only contact between peoples is through diplomats, and that is not enough. The diplomats get to know each other but not the people they represent.". Dealing again

with scepticism, being told it is a wild dream, she considers "it is even more needed now than in 1920. This museum of villages of all peoples on earth would be like the world in miniature," (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans, 1947,* 261). Stan is convinced of the benefits of such a place where the second-generation immigrants could learn about their parents' culture and could become more proud of their origins and more tolerant towards other nations.

An important step towards achieving her dream is the copyright she obtained for her *A Plan for and Ethnographic Museum of Peasant Art*. Anișoara continues to look for support, this time from Harold Stassen, governor of Minnesota. She is invited to the Minnesota Club, where Anișoara impresses the audience with her plans. Sitting next to the governor and to the historian Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian-American, president of the Historical Society of Minnesota, Anișoara Stan has the chance to present her project for the museum and its importance for the people of Minnesota. Blegen expresses his support for her idea of establishing the outdoor museum as long as it will be a live museum, not a stone museum. Acknowledging that the greatest accomplishments start from fantastic dreams, vision and inspiration, he congratulates Anișoara Stan her "fine work and when I'll be called on to do my share I'll do it wholeheartedly. It should be put up here in Minnesota. Harold Stassen was right. He has vision, he saw it. Good for him." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 326). This fortunate encounter with the Norwegian-American historian, the first who appreciated the value of America letters and a supporter of the preservation of the cultural heritage comes to confirm her belief that people are very much alike, that all nationalities, that both Norwegians and Romanians have distinct cultural identity elements that need to be known and preserved.

Her plan in a nutshell was that Stan wanted to put in one place the villages of all the peoples of the world. She acknowledged "It was a revolutionary thing to do and has never been done before. It was internationalism, not chauvinism. It meant retaining the individual beauties and differences of peoples, but all together, in a spirit of cooperation, not at each other's throats." Again, the connection with the Norwegian culture appears, as she considers the outdoor peasant museums at Skansen in Sweden, Lillehammer in Norway and Bucharest in Romania worthy examples of how these museums should look like, as they were built by the people themselves. Her belief is that a visit to these museums would be enriching, by seeing "the genius of the plain people in front of your eyes, the imagination, sense of

beauty and utility of their work, portraying deep inner feelings and intense spiritual life." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 366).

Stan is eventually disappointed, as she is no longer given support to organise the museum because she believes her idea was stolen by someone who had been her supporter until then: "People were the same all over. The same greatness, the same smallness, no matter what their language was that they spoke." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 346) After attempts to establish the outdoor museum near New York, she realizes that the project might not come true. The final section of the book contains reproductions from numerous letters to and from the United Nations, as well as other officials regarding her project.

Anişoara Stan believed that folk arts are the very soul of a people not born into a mechanized world, and she envisions that a living museum, not protected in glass, but opened to the public, alive with events, would allow all ethnic groups to express their cultural identity through folk arts (Tracy, 1948, 106). In her message to the United Nations, at the end of her autobiography, she urges them not to oppress any nation or people and to allow them the freedom to express themselves.

> Take the example of my native Transylvania and my own life. For over 1000 years we were oppressed, but they could not kill us. We survived; but not only survived – from a few thousands, we grew to quite a few millions. Behind locked doors we were taught Romanian, the tongue of our mothers and fathers. We preserved our traditions, our ways, our beautiful peasant art. I still have pieces centuries-old in my collection, as alive today as ever were. You cannot kill a nation. If you chop it into smaller regions, they will become bolder and live only for one purpose, to fight, to win back their land, to become reunited. Do not an injustice to any people; yes, even those who were our enemies. If you do, the same thing will happen that happened to Transylvania." (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 386).

By referring to her native region, Anişoara Stan spoke of the difficulties the Romanians encountered, but which they succeeded to overcome through their enduring culture, through the language of their parents, through the preservation of their traditions. She argues, then, that these elements of cultural identity, language, traditions, folk art, provided means for survival for oppressed peoples.

Preliminary Conclusions

Anișoara Stan was a dreamer who crossed the Atlantic, like thousands of other Romanians, with hopes of attaining a better life by earning enough money to return richer to the homeland. However, her story is different as she considered the Romanian traditions and folk art as an essential part of her identity and was determined to get the others, Romanians, Americans and other nationalities, acquainted with the traditional costumes and objects she had inherited from her grandmother and mother, which she considered to be exquisite and invaluable. She travels all across the United States, visiting the Romanian immigrant communities, organizing exhibitions of folk costumes and objects, and succeeds in reviving a little bit of the Romanian spirit in those that had left the homeland.

Born in a Romanian family from Cluj, Stan experienced difficult times under the Austro-Hungarian rule, when folk costumes and art was the only way they could express their ethnicity, as the language of their forefathers was learned in the family and in churches, while they had to use another language, Hungarian, in their everyday life. Feeling the oppression on her people, she becomes aware of the importance of preserving the elements that make up a nation's identity and dedicates her entire life to the promotion of peasant art, of the cultural heritage. Yet, her vision is inclusive, as she considers the specificities of the various cultures in the American melting pot need to be known and preserved for they fostered tolerance and harmony among peoples. Through the project of an outdoor ethnographic museum which could become the place of expression for numerous cultures, Stan reveals her vision ahead of her time. A young woman who ventured to an unknown world and experienced the difficulties of immigration, Anișoara Stan glorifies peasant life and values and succeeds in coming with a different perspective on immigration.

They Crossed Mountains and Oceans, the autobiography she published in 1947, after the Second World War, is loaded with vivid and naïve descriptions of her homeland, of the harmony specific to the rural world. Nevertheless, the book also describes her struggles for the preservation of the Romanian cultural heritage not with the intention to reveal differences, but rather to embrace differences and understand that the multitude of cultures that are part of America render its distinctiveness. Each of them has its place and relevance in the large heterogeneous American society. An advocate of the

immigrants, Anișoara Stan believes "The foreign born are true Americans in the finest sense of the word.". Despite their hard work and role in the American society, they are not fully accepted and are oftentimes discriminated against and their "feeling of inferiority prevents their complete integration into American life. The whole nation is the loser because of this.". The role of each ethnic group is important, as she highlights:

> We now know that not sameness, but diversity is what we need most. The very differences between the many groups making up the country are a source of strength, not weakness. Just as a variety of landscape makes for beauty, so does a variety of peoples. It is our duty to utilize the gifts these people have to offer, as we use the wood from our forests and the wheat from our plains. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 370).

In America, despite the longing for the homeland and family, Anișoara could pursue her dream of making the Romanian folk art known and appreciated. Aside from its functional and aesthetic role, folk art is an essential part of their heritage, a marker of their identity, that can strengthen the connection between first-generation immigrants and their children, who have the tendency to reject the foreign, un-American elements of their identity out of shame over their immigrant background or simply because they do not consider them essential in their American life. By visiting the Romanian-American communities, organising exhibitions and different social events with traditional Romanian music, food, dances presented by immigrants dressed in the costumes inherited from their parents, Anișoara drew invisible bridges across the Atlantic, and the Romanians, Americans and other nations should not forget her vision and efforts. Still, her contribution to the strengthening of the Romanian-American community and to the preservation of the Romanian cultural heritage, her struggle for attaining world peace and tolerance through a global ethnographic museum are rarely mentioned. It was all the more necessary to discuss her autobiography and vision in the context of migration literature.

CONCLUSIONS

This book tried to look beyond the advantages of emigration, focusing on how people perceived it, on uprootedness and the adjustment in a new culture by analysing a selection of immigrant narratives written by writers who experienced emigration themselves. When they left the homeland and embarked on ships that would carry them to America, the immigrants were driven by the impetus to attain a better life, pushed by poverty and lack of prospects in their country of birth. Young and enthusiastic about the new life that would await them, they paid little attention to what this experience might entail. As they were distancing themselves from the familiar shores, bidding farewell to their family and friends, they started to feel immersed into the unknown, they began to realise that the implications of their choice ran deeper than they could have envisaged.

Upon their arrival in America, these young writers were struck by the huge differences between the old world they had left behind and the new world they had come to, first of all in terms of architecture, city life, then in terms of language, lifestyle, and behaviour. Born and raised in the countryside or in rather small towns, possessing strong rural roots and unfamiliar with the hustle and bustle of a highly industrialized city like New York, their first encounter with such immensity of space and such a huge city generated awe and amazement, while it also made them think of their fate in the New World, which might resemble that of a grain of sand on a sandy beach.

No names have been provided until now because the story depicted above was the story that millions of Europeans shared as they emigrated to America during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The separation from the familiar surroundings of the homeland, and the attempt to find their place in a foreign country across the Atlantic Ocean would eventually trigger questions of identity and belonging, from which they would try to heal by writing about it, and by trying to preserve their cultural heritage as they were embracing the culture of their adoptive country. Moreover, the intenention was not to render a complete depiction of the

emigration through this analysis of the immigrant narratives, but to discuss the questions of identity, alienation, and belonging as expressions of personal experiences of migration.

The young writers discussed here were all in their twenties. The first in this analysis, Ole Edvart Rølvaag, left Norway in 1896 as a fisherman and became an appreciated professor and writer in Northfield, Minnesota. The second writer was the famous Knut Hamsun, who emigrated to America in 1882 with the intention to bring poetry into the lives of the Norwegians in America, but failed, and embarked in 1886 on a second voyage, which he knew would be temporary, to secure himself enough money to be able to become a writer in Norway. Finally, Anișoara Stan left Romania with a trunk loaded with her dowry consisting of folk costumes and pieces of folk art that had been in her family for generations, which she exhibited all across the United States, among the Romanians in America, and the other ethnic groups. Their experiences shaped the way in which they perceived America and emigration, revealing their strong attachment to the culture of their homeland. It is important to underline the fact that – in the case of the Norwegian writers – both the original texts in Norwegian, and their translations into English have been studied, with the aim of achieving a thorough analysis of the subject, whereas the Romanian writer selected for the research wrote only in English.

Before analysing the narratives considered relevant for this discussion, the concepts of identity, cultural identity and belonging have been tackled with reference to emigration. Due to the prevalence of the question of identity in the research area, the challenge was to extract its meanings and valences that were related to the perception of the immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarding identity and ethnicity within the wider American context. The more recent discussion on cultural identity also fits this theme, as it explains the elements of culture, the importance of common ancestry, language, religion, and other elements as characteristics that determine the affiliation of an individual to an ethnic group. Furthermore, the concept of belonging has been attached to cultural identity, which becomes highly relevant in the case of immigrants. All the time, the focus was on the immigrant experience, the one that generates significant change in the life of individuals, making them question who they are and where they belong. The different responses to this identity crisis are conclusive for their integration in their new culture.

The next natural step in this endeavour was to discuss the role of migration literature as a first-hand account of the immigrant experience. In its broader sense, this literature comprises both letters, diaries, newspaper articles, poems, folk poetry, short stories, autobiographies and novels, narratives which reveal the personal and subjective dimension of emigration. Edvard Hoem's opinion that "the collective emigration history is so complex that it can be an advantage to follow individuals because we can see better the big picture." (Hoem, 2018) is illustrative for the choice to concentrate on the personal stories of emigration. It is relevant to mention here that migration literature also played a part in the preservation of the immigrants' background culture as it enhanced cohesion within their migrant communities due to its representative character.

As this book discussed both Norwegian-American and Romanian-American immigrant narratives, correspondences between the Norwegian and Romanian emigration have been identified. The chapter dedicated to the Norwegian and the Romanian emigration to the New World is a diachronic analysis of the two emigrations, with focus on the way the phenomenon unfolded, on the causes that generated the exodus, as well as on the building of the two immigrant communities. Both Norwegians and Romanians stemmed largely from rural areas, but, if Norwegians settled in rural areas in America, the Romanians settled in large industrial urban areas, feeling perhaps a little more the bitter costs of emigration, since the separation from nature must have caused additional distress. Special attention has been given to the correspondence between the immigrants and their family and friends in the homeland, as these America letters described their perception of the adoptive country, their joys and sorrows, some of them exaggerating the benefits of emigration, contributing thus, to its evolution, whereas others emphasised the longing for the homeland. These correspondences revealed that the Norwegian and Romanian immigrants had similar reasons for emigrating, and dealt with largely the same problems of adjustment, no matter their ethnicity. Despite the significantly larger number of Norwegians that emigrated to America, the emigration had a serious impact in both homelands.

The novelty of this research lies in the juxtaposition of three different writers, coming from two different cultures that were exposed, and, eventually assimilated to the American culture, in order to highlight the universal character of the questions of identity and belonging caused by emigration.

Their immigrant narratives are testimonies of the immigrant experience they all went through. Furthermore, these authors belong to the significant waves of emigration from Norway and Romania, as the historical dimension is important to justify both similarities and differences in the process of adjustment, of acculturation. They also played an important role in their immigrant communities in the United States, as they contributed to the preservation of the cultural heritage inherited from the homeland while embracing the culture of the New World.

Thus, Rølvaag and Stan present more similarities since they both remained in America, achieving the dreams that had determined them to emigrate. Hamsun, on the other hand, had a temporary immigrant experience, as he could not find his place in the American world. Upon his return to Europe he published a bitter book on America in which he criticised the American materialism. He repudiated the views he had presented in *The Cultural Life of Modern America* later in his life, and even mentioned how he would never consent to have it translated into English. Yet, of the three authors, he was the one that achieved the greatest success, as he was distinguished with the Nobel Prize for literature, and became one of the most known and appreciated Norwegian writers. Rølvaag was more preoccupied with highlighting the costs of emigration, stressing how the immigrants no longer belonged to their homeland, nor entirely to the adoptive country, although he also achieved success, and became the most prominent Norwegian-American writer. Anişoara Stan has a more modern vision shaped by the experience of the two world wars, as she perceives emigration as beneficial to her identity, since the cultural encounters experienced in America have enriched her existence. However, we need to consider the fact that she emigrated much later than the other two authors, in 1922, when Rølvaag was publishing *Concerning Our Heritage*, and two years after Hamsun had received the Nobel prize for literature, hence the shift in mentality and the openness of her vision.

As already mentioned, Stan's and Rølvaag's narratives reveal their strong attachment to the cultural heritage of their homelands. Stan describes her arduous efforts to present the Romanian folk art to the Romanians in America, but also to the other ethnic groups, raising awareness about how important it was for them as a community to remember their roots, to appreciate the traditions inherited from their parents, and pass them on to their children. Rølvaag, through Beret's voice, illustrated the negative

implications of uprootedness, of separation from the traditions and the faith of their forefathers. Beret – unlike her husband, Per, who seizes with enthusiasm and ambition all the challenges of their life in the prairie –, sinks deeper into depression, feeling alienated in the Dakota wilderness, torn away from the familiar surroundings of the Norwegian shores, but mostly from her family, and Lutheran faith. It is necessary to highlight the role of religion, which both writers evoke. Thus, Rølvaag and Stan emphasize through their narratives how the faith of their ancestors was a polestar for the immigrants. Particularly in difficult times, their faith in God proved essential, providing them with support and confidence. Moreover, the immigrant chest is an important motif in both Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth* and Anișoara Stan's *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, as both Beret and Anișoara keep their treasures from the homeland in the trunks they had brought with them on the voyage across the Atlantic.

Nature is another relevant element in the narratives that have been analysed here. Hence the appreciation for rural life, and the intricate strong relation to nature plays an important role in the memories of all the writers that have been analysed, acting as a healing factor for the displaced immigrants. Hamsun remained deeply impressed by the beauty of the prairie sunsets, which he described in the sketches that have been analysed, and also in his letters. Despite the difficult life he had on the prairie because of the summer heat, and the hard work, the loneliness, he could only feel amazed when witnessing such a display of nature's beauty. Likewise, Anișoara Stan writes about her love for nature, starting with the depictions of the geraniums on the window sills of her grandmother's house, and is shocked upon her arrival in New York to notice that there were scarcely any trees in the big city. Her dream of establishing an outdoor ethnographic museum determines her to purchase a farm in Stony Creek, New Jersey, a place that reminded her of rural Transylvania, but a place that she never succeeded to turn into a 'living museum'.

Some important background information about Romanians in Transylvania is also useful to understand Stan's perspective. Thus, the Romanian-Americans who emigrated to America at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were Transylvanians, the large majority of them. Experiencing life under Austro-Hungarian rule, limited freedom of expression, forced service in the Austro-Hungarian army, the obligation to speak another language – the valences of their identity were even more

complex, as they longed already from the homeland to freely express their culture. In America, the oppressed Romanians found the freedom to be themselves. Anișoara Stan belongs to this group, and perceives the immigrant experience as both disruptive, because of the distance it creates between herself and her family, but mostly as beneficial, because it offers her the chance to promote the Romanian culture, to speak of her roots, of peasant life and their art, that she treasures enormously. The tone that emerges from her narratives is, hence, less nostalgic than the one from Rølvaag's texts. One could say that this research, is, in a way, unintentionally, a tribute to Stan's activity due to the juxtaposition of two different cultures with the purpose of revealing the similar immigrant experiences in America, but also because her dusty book has been reopened from the shelves of the Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca, where she herself must have stepped a hundred years ago. Her efforts to celebrate the specificity of each culture to enhance cultural cohesion, as well as to foster tolerance need to be better known and appreciated:

> Each nationality group feels pride in itself because of its cultural heritage. It feels that it has given the world something of beauty. However, it is too often ignorant of the contributions made by other ethnic groups. An opportunity must be given to each segment of our population to see what other peoples have created in a cultural way. (*They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, 1947, 370).

Stan's vision is shared by Rølvaag, who encouraged Norwegians in America to strive to integrate in the multicultural American society, distinguishing themselves from the other ethnic groups through their contribution to the American culture, without losing their Norwegian identity. Homemaking myths such as the Vikings that had discovered America long before Columbus, or the adventurous and exploring nature of the Norwegians were elements used in his plea for a distinct and vocal Norwegian-American community.

An even more comprehensive image over the immigrant experience as described in migration literature is envisaged by analysing Edvard Hoem's novels about the Norwegian emigration to America. The Norwegian author recreates and narrates his Norwegian-American family saga in four volumes that depict the journey of the immigrants through the filter of today's descendant. Published between 2014 and 2017, the Hoem saga on American

shores tells the story of the men and women in the Hoem family who found their way to the Dakota and Alberta prairies. His perspective is even more noteworthy as he concentrates not only on the way the immigrants themselves perceived the emigration, but he also reveals the attitude of those who remained in the homeland, of the father who longed to hear news from his son who settled in Canada, and hoped until his death that his son would return. The point of view of the family who stayed in the homeland is important to analyse in order to achieve proper understanding of emigration.

Identity and belonging are themes that have always preoccupied us, starting from the ancient times when the maxim *Nosce te ipsum* ("Know thyself") began to emerge in literature. We are all in a constant search of a connection with the past, trying to understand it and perceive its effects upon the present. As we see thousands of refugees fleeing their war-torn countries, crossing seas in overcrowded boats, even at the cost of drowning, or jumping over fences, even with the risk of having their children taken away from them, it is natural to try to find answers in the past. The decision to emigrate is never an easy one, and only those who experienced emigration themselves can truly understand all its implications. Although the experiences depicted in the immigrant narratives that have been analysed are far less dramatic than the ones mentioned above, there was still no way back for many of those who joined the millions who left Europe for America, breaking the ties with the homeland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These women and men faced challenges they had never expected. Some of them, like Hamsun, turned their back on the New World, and found their place in the homeland. Others, like Rølvaag, and Stan, remained in America, and made their voices heard among their ethnic groups and beyond. The multicultural American society was fascinating, and still exerts fascination, and Øverland claims that studies on multiculturalism in America should focus on the American culture as a whole, but also on the particular cultures that contribute to it, as this may "lead to a new understanding of what makes the many one." (Øverland, 2000, 194).

The immigrants are bound to possess a double consciousness, as they were shaped by the Old World and ventured to face the challenges of the New World, trying all this time not to forget who they were and where they came from, struggling to preserve their identity. Their ambivalent nature makes them resemble Janus, the god of beginnings, with one face looking at their past, and the other at their new beginnings.

Migration literature can be considered therapeutic for both the writers and their readers as it enhances their expression of the inner conflicts generated by uprootedness, alleviating thus the burden of alienation.

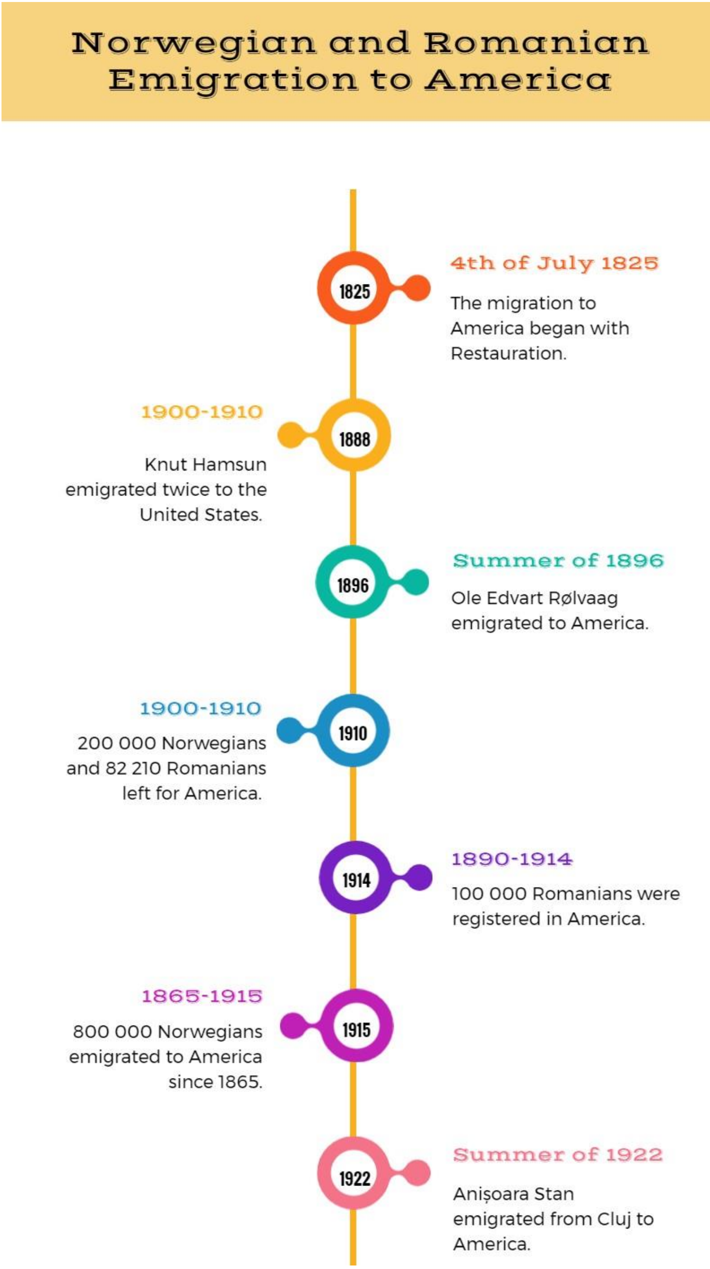


Figure 2. ***Timeline of the Norwegian and Romanian emigration to America***

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ANNEXES

Intervju med Edvard Hoem (Norwegian)[94]
Oslo, 15. september 2018

1. Hvorfor har du valgt å skrive om din families utvandringshistorie fra mer enn 100 år siden?

E.H.: Den første grunnen var at far, som da var lekpredikant i Indremisjonen, som er et fenomen, ikke et [...]. Han var veldig mye borte, han var borte sju måneder hvert år, så da han kom hjem var han sliten og han kunne kanskje ligge og hvile seg litt på søndag formiddag mens mor var ..., som hadde gård og alt var [...], som hadde gård og alt, hun bare matte fyke opp og [...]. Det var min gylden sjanse for han var en veldig god historieforteller. Han hadde to historier: den ene var om oldefar som hadde fire sønner og som han mistet på forskjellig vis, og den andre historien var om de som reiste til Amerika og som vi ikke vet hvor er. Dette synes jeg var fem- seksåring, de veldig spennende historier. Så jeg prøvde allerede som ung mann, da jeg var på teateret i Molde, å skrive teaterstykke om han som hadde fire sønner og mistet alle sammen. Men av forskjellige grunner så lot jeg det være blant annet fordi at han som var sjef der han sa at du må aldri skrive om familie, [da] må du ta så mange hensyn. Så jeg lot det være. Men også på 80-tallet en gang, så prøvde jeg å skrive en bok om slåttekaren, men den ble ikke riktig god, det ble litt statisk, så lånte penger og reiste til Amerika, bodde i Amerika i ett år og da fikk jeg en telefon fra en som sa: Edvard Hoem, er du i live nå? Jeg sa: Ja, jeg er i live, jeg er jo bare 40 år. Han sa: Jeg så navnet ditt på en gravstein i Sisseton, South Dakota, sa han. Men det må være en annen Edvard Hoem, og da skjønte at det var en forskjellig familie. Så reiste jeg altså til Sisseton, South Dakota, og hadde med far og sånn, og familien min, og møtte hundre slektninger, og var sammen med dem i tre dager, og plutselig så skjønte jeg at han som gikk aleine og slo i førti år på andres jord og

[94] I had the chance to interview Edvard Hoem in September 2018, during a one-month research scholarship at the University of Oslo under the supervision of Professor Ingeborg Kongslien, who was so kind as to put me in contact with the writer.

historien om de som reiste var på en måte samme historie fordi at han var jo ikke interessert i ..., men han mistet jo sønnen sin og alle ble borte rundt ham på en måte, [...]. Og sønnen hans drar jo til Sisseton i South Dakota, til tante Gjertine, ikke sant. Så da skjønte jeg at dette var samme historie så måtte jeg begynne å gjøre undersøkelser for å finne ut om jeg kunne skrive om dette. Så jeg reiste da i løpet av 90-tallet, var jeg 3-4 ganger i Sisseton, SD, som er veldig avsides, langt, 2 og halv timer fra Minneapolis, og fortsatte vel også på 2000-tallet, men så skjedde mange andre ting, for eksempel at det var en slektning som mente at dette var hans materiale, han ville skrive om det, så sa jeg ok, da venter jeg 5-6 år, så får vi se om du skriver om det, og det har han aldri gjort da. Men i mellomtida så skrev jeg om Bjørnson, og det tok veldig mye mer tid enn jeg hadde tenkt. Så det var først i 2011-2012 jeg kunne begynne å tenke på dette igjen. Og da hadde jo gått over 20 år siden jeg skjønte hvordan jeg skulle gjøre det, egentlig. Det har tatt veldig lang tid, men jeg har også brukt veldig mye tid på *research*, da, som vi kaller det for veldig ... fordi at jeg skjønte at ... Altså, jordbruk i Norge, det kan jeg jo ut inn gratis når jeg er født på et tidspunkt før norsk jordbruk nesten var mekanisert. Det livet som slåttekaren levde i Norge hadde jeg ikke noe problem å skrive om, men det amerikanske livet på prærien, måtte jeg jo studere: aviser og mange andre ting.

2. Hva kan individuelle 'utvandringserfaringer' fortelle oss i tillegg til den kollektive utvandringshistorien?

E.H.: Jeg tror at vi må huske at dette her er en roman slik at Eilert, som er sønnen av slåttekaren, han er jo naturligvis Eilert, men han er også en representant for han må vel mene: hundretusenvis av unge norske menn som dro alene til Amerika, spesielt på 1890 -tallet, og som aldri kom tilbake. De som dro etter 1900, ofte kom det jo sånne ensomme menn, de kom jo tilbake, hadde litt penger og kjøpte hus eller gård i Norge, men den kollektive utvandringshistorien er så kompleks at det kan være en fordel å følge enkeltpersoner, så vi ser den store sammenhengen bedre da. Og Eilert er en veldig typisk representant fordi at han gjør ... det var 43 000 nordmenn som reiste fra USA inn i Canada, i Alberta-prærien. Han var på ingen måte en ensom/unik skikkelse, han var jo en typisk skikkelse. Og hans historie, den representerer jo og anskueliggjør, da, den kollektive utvandringshistorien på en spesiell måte ... Og når du får lest de siste bøkene, vil du se at den historien vi hittil kjenner er relativ, omfanget av katastrofen på 30-tallet f. eks., det har ikke vært kjent før. Mine slektninger i Canada sier at de snakker ikke engang

om det på skolen hvor forferdelig det var da depresjonen kom og hvor mange som fikk ødelagt livet sitt og mistet jorda si og sånne ting. Så det har vært veldig interessant å grave i det på den måten også. Så det har vært veldig interessant å grave i det på den måten også. Det er jo alltid kombinert. Men det som kanskje kommer bedre fram i en roman er drømmene folk hadde og slike ting, som det er litt vanskelig for en eksakt historievitenskap å forholde seg til. Men min viktigste oppdagelse mener jeg at er det som spilte en veldig stor rolle var religionen, at den norske haugianismen, lekmannsreligionen i Norge, den var veldig sånn; du behøver ingen prest, du behøver ingen biskop, du kan stå rett opp for Gud og så kan du snakke til Ham og Han vil svare, du er Hans barn osv… Så veldig mange hadde også konflikt med embetsmenn, prester og Hans Nilsen Hauge, som er leder for dette, han har jo sittet i fengsel i mange år. Det var tidligere på 1800-tallet. Men de hadde nok fått en spesiell religiøs impuls, så når de da satt der i fattigdom tenkte at de hadde rett og plikt å bryte opp og det er på en måte ett skritt nærmere himmelen, bygget en ny Jerusalem i Amerika og på Alberta-prærien.

3. I romanene, hvordan bestemte folk seg for å utvandre til Amerika?

E.H.: I mitt tilfelle den første som drar er Gjertine, hun er opprørsk, kommer i konflikt med presten – der hun hadde sånn rangering på kirkegården og hun var nummer en, men ble satt som nummer ni – og alt hun var i konflikt med og ville oppleve noe mer enn å bare sitte på dette lille småbruket. Så, hadde hun litt sånn dominoeffekt faktisk, at, altså … utvandringen fra Norge skjer i bølger, det begynte veldig tidlig i Rogaland, med på Romsdal var det først veldig langt utpå 1880-tallet, at de begynte å reise derfra. det begynte. Da var det familier som reiste veldig ofte eller klaner, at de som er gift den … den … med den, de dro fordi at først og fremst det var for lite jord og veldig lite muligheter for å livberge seg på noen annen måte. I Sisseton, der finner du igjen gårdsnavn ifra Ytre Romsdal over hele landskapet, det heter Neland, Kjørstvik, Stavik, Hoem, alle disse navnene finner du igjen på prærien som er kommet derfra da.

På en måte gjenskapte de…?

E.H.: De prøvde å gjenskape de forbindelsene de hadde her, og jeg tror også det var jeg tror det var sånn at de bygde jo skandinaviske samfunn og det tok jo 2 og 3 og 4 generasjoner før de egentlig blandet seg engelskmenn, polske,

tyske, danske osv. og så det var et veldig norsk samfunn den gangen, Indianerne naturligvis, eller urinnbyggerne eller hva du skal kalle det.

4. Hvor viktig var det for deg å få fram i romanene vanskelighetene de strevet med underveis? Var Amerika det lovede landet de hadde innbilt seg?

E.H.: Nei, det var nok ikke alltid det, dessverre. Det var nok veldig mange som innse det ikke var så himmelsk som de hadde tenkt. Men min interesse er jo ikke først og fremst historisk. Jeg oppdaget på et tidspunkt at utvandrerperioden stiller eksistensielle spørsmål på spissen: skal vi reise eller skal vi dra? Det tenker alle mennesker på. De fleste tenker: jeg orker ikke denne byen, jeg orker ikke denne kjæresten, denne jobben, eller … men de fleste blir jo, da. Når de reiste hit så reiste de for bestandig, det var ingen vei tilbake. Og så oppdaget de da at sånn er det med alle eksistensielle spørsmål utvandrerperioden stiller på spissen: I den andre boka er det store spørsmålet for Eilert: kan jeg realisere mine drømmer eller må jeg dra tilbake og ta meg av foreldrene mine som er blitt gamle og fattige? Det blir en veldig stor konflikt for ham da, mens det dermed er søstera kommer tilbake og tar seg av foreldrene, sånn at han kan realisere sine drømmer, å bygge farm på Alberta- prærien. Det spørsmålet har vi jo alle sammen også, hvor mye kan jeg realisere av mine egne drømmer og hvor mye må jeg ta hensyn til barn eller foreldre eller de nærmeste rundt meg, Og sånn fortsetter det på en måte, med den tredje boka mener jeg det er sånn at Eilert kjører veldig på, for å liksom arbeider kjempehardt og driver også hele familien sin egentlig veldig hardt for at de skal få det veldig bra siden, så er da spørsmålet får vi det bra siden hvis vi jobber veldig hardt nå og i den siste boka sier jeg at spørsmålet er: i hvor stor grad styrer vi vår egen skjebne? Er det utenforliggende krefter eller er vi som bestemmer og det er også et dilemma som alle mennesker merker at vi har nok kontroll delvis over vår egen skjebne, så det er ytre forhold som avgjør veldig mye. Så mitt poeng er bare at eksistensielle problemstillinger er grunnen til at disse bøkene blir lest så mye, og kanskje andre ting også, men det er kommet veldig mange bøker om utvandringen i Amerika, men det er veldig få som blir solgt så mye. For folk sier til meg: vi leser dem fordi vi har en onkel eller grandonkel i Amerika. Ja, kanskje det, men altså ikke først og fremst derfor. Det må være noe som har noe med oss nå å gjøre, tenker jeg.

5. Kvinnene er veldig sterke personer i romanene. Hvilken rolle spilte de i utvandringen, men også i tilpasningsprosessen i den nye verden og i utvandrernes hensyn til den norske arven? Hva ville du spesielt få fram i romanene når det gjelder kvinnenes rolle?

E.H.: For det første at jeg tror ofte det var ofte kvinner som tok initiativet og det er veldig lite kjent. For det andre at norske bondekvinner var veldig lite påvirket av den tradisjonelle borgerlige kjønnsrolle. De måtte være sterke fordi livet var veldig krevende, mange var fiskerkoner, det var et farlig liv, de var mye alene, det var de som styrte. Og jeg kommer jo fra en gård, det var mor som styrte alt på den gården. Hun forstod ingenting av moderne kvinnefrigjøring fordi det var ikke hennes problem. Det er kanskje litt inspirert av det, da, men jeg ... Jeg tror også det at i å finnes til rette i Amerika så var det også kvinnene som måtte holde veldig mye sammen på farmen og i hjemmet, da, fordi at mannen måtte reise ut noen ganger, ikke sant? Jeg tror generelt at bildet av norsk kvinneundertrykkelse eller kjønnsroller sånn som en finner oss i Camilla Collet eller... Det er borgerskapets kvinner som er undertrykt og innestengt mye mer enn bondekvinnene, så det var sånn at de hadde egne arbeidsoppgaver, og det var først og fremst i huset, da, naturligvis og mannen var ute, sånn var det jo. Men det var ikke nødvendigvis sånn at et var mannen som bestemte. For jeg tror kvinnene var veldig sentrale i utvandringen generelt sett. Og det der er jo et inntrykk Inntrykket jeg har fått gjennom å studere. Og så må man huske på at i Haugianismen, denne religiøse lekmannsbevegelsen, det var kvinner likestilt med menn. Haugianerbevegelsen hadde kvinnelige ledere, kvinnelige salmediktere, kvinnelige predikanter og det var jo helt uaktuelt i den norske kirken for øvrig. Det var ingen prester ... De var kommet veldig langt da. Da disse her reiste, de hadde nok en selvoppfatning som var at de var like mye verdt som menn.

6. Lengselen etter det gamle landet og familien de hadde forlatt hjemme var grunnen til at mange følte seg fremmede i Amerika og ikke lenger visste hvem de var. Var de som utvandret bevisst sin norsk-amerikanske identitet?

E.H.: Det er jo et vanskelig og stort spørsmål, da. En ting var jo: å reise så langt at du aldri får se igjen det landskapet som du er oppvokst i, det er veldig krevende, og vi vet om at veldig mange fikk depresjoner, som de kaller for

pæriesyke fordi de ble deprimert med tanke på at de aldri skal se igjen hverken familie eller ... Den første generasjonen som bygde norske samfunn, de snakket norsk, barna skulle lære norsk osv., men dette er jo bare om norsk... relativt tidlig... rundt århundreskiftet, rundt 1900 må de gi opp norsken i South Dakota, i Canada var det norsk skole helt fram til 1917, tror jeg, men så innser de jo vi gradvis at ideen om å bygge rene norske samfunn det går ikke an for det er for mye blanding, i Canada blir det jo også aktivt fra myndighetenes side insistert på at du skal bli canadier, så de bygger skoler rundt, for at folk fra mange nasjoner skal arbeide sammen og bli canadier uansett hudfarge og religion. Men den siste generasjonen som snakket norsk i USA... I Canada da jeg var der første gang, det var en banksjef i Sisseton, han snakket norsk, og så var det og min fars kusine, som heter Sophie Gallagher, hun snakket norsk pga. at hun hadde snakket norsk hjemme hos ..., fra mor og far fram til 1920 cirka. Men da disse to døde, så det var ingen igjen som snakket norsk i min familie heller. De så jo naturligvis at dette var et prosjekt som kom til å dø, men den siste generasjonen som regner seg som norsk, det er faktisk min generasjon, altså mine tremenninger da, eller, de har vokst opp i Donalda, i Alberta, og de skal begraves på den gamle norske kirkegården, men deres barn, som er på din alder, de kunne ikke bry seg.... For de bor overhele jo vel i Amerika, de kommer gjerne en gang i året og ser den gamle farmen, men den er også solgt nå, da, her i mange år, har sett den gamle faren min, så det finnes ingenting igjen av norsk identitet. Det går jo inn i den amerikanske *mainstream*-kulturen.

7. Livet til de som ble hjemme i Norge var også sterkt påvirket av utvandringen. Hvis man tenker på Nesje, som mistet, på en måte, alle sønnene sine, hvilken oppfatning hadde de han (de som ble hjemme) av utvandringen? Hvordan forholdte de seg til Amerika i den gamle verden?

E.H.: Nesje var jo imot utvandringen, han mente at det var galt for Norge, at vi skulle dyrke Norges jord og bygge Norge og det moderne samfunnet. Men de andre fikk, sønnene, søsknene til Eilert, min bestefar, han fikk jo brev som vi har men de skrev to ganger i året, for de hadde jo travle liv alle sammen, til jul kanskje og sånn, og skrev litt om hvordan de hadde det, men det var veldig få som kunne skrive ærlig hvis det var vanskelig. Og da det ble vanskelig på 30-tallet så skrev ikke Eilert noe om det til sin bror, nei. Det var jo nokså logisk at de som utvandret og satset så stort, at de måtte skjule problemene sine. Men det kom jo også... Det var jo veldig mye stoff fra

Amerika i norske aviser i denne perioden, så de visste om at ikke alt var like lett, da. Men de som hadde reist, hadde reist, og de som var her, var der det var jo sånn det var.

De som ble hjemme var de med lengselen og sånt?

E.H.: Jeg vet ikke. Nesje håper jo at sønnen skal komme hjem, men det gjør han jo aldri. Altså, noen yngre reiste over og kom tilbake, men de fleste kom jo aldri igjen. Og så må du forsone deg med det. Jeg synes det er veldig rart at du aldri ser brødrene dine igjen, f. eks. Men Eilert kom jo til Norge to ganger, men veldig mange andre kom jo aldri tilbake.

8. Hva var viktig for deg under forskningsprosessen for å kunne gjengi stemningen fra 1800 og 1900-tallet?

E.H.: Det er mange som sier at det er veldig langt og at de må ha tenkt på en helt annen måte en oss, men jeg er ikke enig i det, de var som oss. Men det er et overveldende materiale om hvordan de tenkte og om religionens betydning, for eksempel. Ellers så var de menneskelige problemene de samme som vi har, vil jeg tro. Det var naturligvis mye mer stabile samfunn, mye mer stabile familie, nesten ingen skilsmisser, det var jo [slik at] når du først hadde gått inn i dette [d.e. ekteskapet], så kunne du jo ikke bare stikke av. Det gikk jo ikke. Men, nei… jeg synes vi har jo både store skjønnlitterære verker fra den tida, og vi har jo fantastisk mye materiale for øvrig som viser oss hva de prioritert og tenkte og snakket om. Men så er det jo en fiksjon, da selvfølgelig, likevel, det er jo en fiksjonsroman, så pleier jeg å si at det er to typer sannhet her: at to typer sannheter, det er den dokumentariske, det betyr at alt må være riktig som gir seg ut for å være dokumentarisk, altså for eksempel hvis vi sier at krigen i Norge begynte 12. April 1940, så er det feil. Ingen kan skrive i roman og si det, den begynte 9. April 1940. Og alt sånn prisen på et seletøy, prisen på en Amerikabillett, liksom stedene de reiste til, alt dette måtte må være dokumentarisk riktig så langt det er mulig å finne det ut. Men så sier jeg at så er det også en poetisk sannhet. Det er noen på universitetet her som sier at den historiske romanen er umulig, for at vi kan ikke forskjellen på hva som er diktet og hva som er sant. Men da sier jeg at det er noen som heter poetisk sannhet og mine lesere forstår at når det foregår en ekteskapelig samtale på prærien om natta, så lå det ingen under sengen med et lydbånd og tok opp dette. Og det godtar vi, det er kontrakten mellom leserne og meg, da skjønner leserne at det er Edvard Hoem som

diktet dette her. Men noen ganger kan det bli minst like sant, det er en annen type sannhet bare. Vi er jo veldig like når vi reagerer på sorg, når vi reagerer på svik, når vi reagerer på løgn, når vi reagerer på alt dette her hadde jo de, sånn som vi har det. De var ikke bedre mennesker enn oss, de var ikke dårligere mennesker heller, de hadde minst like store drømmer som oss. De var som oss.

9. Hvor aktuelle er de historiske romanene i våre tider?

E.H.: Jeg vet ikke, men det selger jo veldig bra, da hele Norge leser disse bøkene nå. Jeg går jo nesten aldri ut på gata uten å treffe noen som vil snakke om disse bøkene. Og det må jeg jo bare finne meg i. Jeg hadde en samtale med min kone i går, vi snakket om norske prester, de vil bare være prester fra 9 til 4, og ha fri mandag, og de som ellers er ikke prester, de er bare prester når de er på jobb, men så sier jeg at er bare prester når de er på jobb, men så sier jeg at .... vi andre, må jo være forfattere hele tida, når vi går ut og folk snakker til oss. Det skjer helt alltid, overalt her i Oslo, og særlig der jeg kommer fra, selvfølgelig. Men jeg må være forfatter og være på jobb, og svare høflig når folk spør meg og forteller om sine slektninger i Amerika. Det betyr jo veldig mye for det store lesende publikum. Men det er også helt påfallende at, jeg mener dette veldig litterære bøker, så det er det er utrolig lite akademisk interesse i forhold til den publikumsinteressen som fins. Jeg har solgt 300 000 bøker på 4 år nå, det er jo bra, på nynorsk, et språk som mange ikke vil lese i det hele tatt... Det er jo mye viktigere for meg, egentlig. Men jeg mener også at de er veldig litterære bøker da, og jeg har sett med oversettelsen, den danske oversettelsen ble jeg veldig glad for, for at alle disse historiene har en eller annen skjult referanse til Bibelen eller til andre verk..., veldig mye underliggende... som mange lesere ikke oppfatter, men det gjør ingenting for at noen lesere ville ha oppdaget at det er veldig litterært, da, mens noe vil jo si at dette bare er spenning[slitteratur].

10. Hva burde folk i dag forstå eller ikke glemme ut fra utvandringshistoriene fra 1800- og 1900-tallet?

E.H.: Ja, det er jo at utvandringen, det er en internasjonalt og et tidløst fenomen, da, så jeg husker første gang jeg hadde foredrag om *Slåttekar i himmelen*. Det var to italienere der, de bor i Norge pga. norske kvinner da, musikere begge to, og de sa: dette er ikke et lokalt eller norsk problem, vi har også mødre som sitter på Sicilia og savner oss og det er jo litt lettere å besøke

mødrene nå, men det er det samme, at familiene blir brutt opp, at folk blir skilt fra hverandre, det er jo enda mye mer i dag. Alle de som kommer hit på godt og på vondt, de har jo foreldre et eller annet sted, eller veldig mange det hører med til historiens gang og utvandringen er en del av historiens gang.

Interview with Edvard Hoem (English Translation)[95] Oslo, 15th of September 2021

1. Why did you choose to write about your family's emigration story that took place more than 100 years ago?

E.H.: The first reason was that father, who was then a lay preacher in the Inner Mission, which is a phenomenon, not a [...]. He was very much away, as much as seven months every year, so when he came home, he was tired and he wanted to lie down and rest a little on Sunday morning while mother was..., the one who had the farm and everything [...], who had farm and everything, she just had to keep up [...]. It was my golden chance because he was a very good storyteller. He had two stories: one was about great-grandfather who had four sons and whom he had lost in different circumstances, and the other story was about those who travelled to America and who we did not know where they were. I think this was when I was five or six years old; very exciting stories. So, I already tried as a young man, when I was at the theatre in Molde, to write a play about the person who had four sons and lost them all. But for various reasons, I let it be, mainly because he who was the boss at the theatre told me that one should never write about family, as then one has to take so many things in consideration. So, I let it be. Also, in the '80s, I tried once to write a book about the haymaker, but it wasn't really good, it was a bit static. So, I borrowed money and travelled to USA, lived there for a year when I got a phone call from someone who said: Edvard Hoem, are you alive? I said: Yes, I'm alive, I'm only 40 years old. He said: I saw your name on a tombstone in Sisseton, South Dakota, he said. But it must be another Edvard Hoem. Then I realized that it was a different family. So, I went to Sisseton, South Dakota, together with my dad and my family and we met a hundred relatives, and we stayed with them for three days. Suddenly, I realized that the one who went alone and travelled for forty years in other people's land and the story of those who travelled was in a way the same story because he was not interested in..., but he had lost his son and, in a way, everyone disappeared around him [...]. And his son travels to Sisseton, South

[95] Own translation from Norwegian.

Dakota, to Aunt Gjertine, right? So, then I realized that this was the same story. I had to start doing research to find out if I could write about this. So, I travelled during the '90s for 3-4 times to Sisseton, South Dakota, which is a very remote place, about 2 and a half hours from Minneapolis. I continued also in the 2000s, but then many other things had happened. For example, a relative considered that this was his material, that he wanted to write about it. And then I said ok, I will wait for 5-6 years to see if you write about it but he has never done that. In the meantime, I wrote about Bjørnson and it took a lot more time than I had expected. So, it was only in 2011-2012 that I could start thinking about this topic again. And, in fact, over 20 years have passed since I figured out how to write about it. It took a very long time, but I have also spent a lot of time on doing research, as we call it very... because I realized that... So, agriculture in Norway, I had no problem with it because I was born in a period before the mechanization of agriculture in Norway. I had no problem in writing about haymaker's life in Norway, but I had to study the American life on the prairie: newspapers and many other things.

2. What can the individual 'immigrant experience' tell us in addition to the collective emigration history?

E.H.: I think we must remember that this is a novel in which Eilert, who is the son of the haymaker, is of course Eilert, but he is also a representative of what he stands for: hundreds of thousands of young Norwegian men who went to America alone, especially in the 1890s, and who never returned. Those who left after 1900, would often return alone, would have earned some money and bought a house or farm in Norway. But the collective emigration history is so complex that it can be an advantage to follow individuals because we can see better the big picture. And Eilert is a very typical representative because he does... there were 43,000 Norwegians who travelled from the United States into Canada, in the Alberta prairie. He was by no means a lonely, unique figure, he was a typical figure. And his story, it represents and illustrates then the collective emigration story in a special way... And when you will have read the latest books, you will see that the story we have known so far is relative, the extent of the disaster in the '30s, e.g., it has not been known before. My relatives in Canada say that they do not even talk about at school about how terrible it was when the depression came and how many people lost their lives and their land and things like that. So, it has been very interesting to dig into it that way too. So, it has been very interesting to dig into it that way too. It is always combined. But what perhaps is best depicted

in a novel are the dreams people had and things like that, which is difficult to relate to in the context of an exact science. But my most important discovery, I think, is that religion had played a very big role that the Norwegian Haugeanism, the laymen's religion in Norway were like that; you do not need a priest, you do not need a bishop, you can stand up straight for God and then you can talk to Him and He will answer, you are His child etc. ... So many people also had conflict with officials, priests and Hans Nilsen Hauge, who is the leader of this but he has been in prison for many years. That was earlier in the nineteenth century. But they had probably received a special religious impulse, so when they found themselves in poverty, they thought they had the right and a duty to break up and, in a way, take one step closer to heaven, built a new Jerusalem in America and on the Alberta prairie.

3. In the novels, how did people decide to emigrate to America?

E.H.: In my case, the first to leave is Gjertine, she is rebellious, comes into conflict with the priest – where she had such a ranking in the cemetery and she was number one, but was set as number nine – and everything she was in conflict with and wanted to experience something more than just sitting on this little farm. So, she actually had a bit of a domino effect, that, in other words, the emigration from Norway takes place in waves, it started very early in Rogaland, but in Romsdal it was not until very late in the 1880s that they started to travel from there. it started. Then there were families who travelled very often or clans, that those who are married it... it... with it, they left because that first and foremost there was too little land and very few opportunities to save their lives in any other way. In Sisseton, where you will find farm names from Ytre Romsdal all over the landscape, it is called Neland, Kjørstvik, Stavik, Hoem, you will find all these names on the prairie that has come from there then.

In a way, they recreated...?

E.H.: They tried to recreate the connections they had here, and I also think they built Scandinavian societies and it took 2 and 3 and 4 generations before they actually mixed with English, Polish, German, Danish, etc. and so it was a very Norwegian society at the time, together with the Indians of course, or the aborigines or whatever you want to call it.

4. How important was it for you to highlight in the novels the difficulties they struggled with along the way? Was America the promised land they had imagined?

E.H.: No, that was probably not always the case, unfortunately. There were probably very many who realized it was not as heavenly as they had thought. But my interest is not primarily historical. I discovered at one point that the period of emigration raises existential questions: should we travel or should we leave? All people think about it. Most people think: I cannot bear this city, I cannot bear this girlfriend, this job, or… but in spite of this, most people stay. When they travelled here, they travelled forever, there was no going back. And then they discovered that this is how it is with all the existential questions the emigrant period poses. In the second book, the big question for Eilert is: can I achieve my dreams or do I have to go back and take care of my parents who have grown old and poor? That moment becomes a significant conflict for him. It is his sister the one who comes back and takes care of the parents, so that he can achieve his dreams, namely to build a farm on the Alberta prairie. We all have asked that question: how much can I achieve of my own dreams and how much do I have to care for children or parents or those closest to me? And so, it goes in a way, with the third book I mean, that Eilert works very hard and determines his whole family to work really hard to live well as then the question is: will we live well if we work very hard now? And in the last book I would say that the question is: to what extent do we control our own destiny? Are there external forces or are we the ones who decide? It is also a dilemma that all people notice, namely that we have partly control over our own destiny and that external factors matter to a large extent. So, my point is that existential issues constitute the reason why these books are read so much, and maybe other things as well, but there have been issued a lot of books about emigration in America, still, there are very few that sold so much. People usually tell me: we read them because we have an uncle or great-uncle in America. Yes, maybe so, but not primarily because of that. There must be something that has to do with us now, I think.

5. Women are very strong characters in the novels. What role did they play in the emigration, but also in the adaptation process in the new world and in the emigrants' consideration for the Norwegian heritage? What would you particularly highlight in the novels when it comes to the role of women?

E.H.: Firstly, I often think that women were the ones who took the initiative and this is very little known. Secondly, Norwegian peasant women were very little influenced by the traditional bourgeois gender role. They had to be strong because life was very demanding, many were fisherwomen. It was a dangerous life; they were much of the time alone and they were the ones who ruled. I also come from a farm where mother was the one who controlled everything. She understood nothing of modern women's liberation because it was not her problem. So, I might have been inspired by that a bit, but I… I think that this was also the case in the USA, were women also had to hold together the farm and the home because the man had to travel sometimes, right? I generally think that the image of Norwegian oppression of women or gender roles as one finds in Camilla Collet or… It is the women of the bourgeoisie who are oppressed and imprisoned much more than the peasant women. So, in this case they had their own duties and the first and foremost concerned the house, when, of course, the husband was out. That's how it was.

But it was not necessarily the case that it was the man who decided. Because I think women were very central to emigration in general. And that is an impression. The impression I got through studying this matter. And one must remember that in Haugeanism, the religious lay movement, women were equal to men. The Haugean movement had female leaders, female hymn writers, female preachers and that was completely out of the question in the Norwegian church in general. There were no priests… They had come a long way then. When they travelled here, they probably had a self-perception that was that they were worth as much as men.

6. The longing for the old country and the family they had left at home was the reason why many felt alienated in America and no longer knew who they were. Were those who emigrated conscious of their Norwegian-American identity?

E.H.: That is a difficult and a big question. One element was that one had to travel so far that he/she would never get to see again the landscape in which one grew up. This is very hard and we know that very many people got depression, which they called prairie-sick. They became depressed thinking that they will never see either family or… The first generation who built Norwegian societies, spoke Norwegian, the children were to learn Norwegian, etc., but this with Norwegian is relatively early … around the turn

of the century. Around 1900 they had to give up Norwegian in South Dakota. There was, I think, in Canada a Norwegian school until 1917. But then they gradually realized that the idea of building pure Norwegian societies does not work because there is too much mixing. In Canada the authorities actively insisted that they should become Canadians. They built schools around so that people from many nations will work together and become Canadians regardless of their skin, colour and religion. But the last generation who spoke Norwegian in the US... When I was in Canada for the first time, there was a bank manager in Sisseton who spoke Norwegian. And it was also my father's cousin, named Sophie Gallagher, who spoke Norwegian because she had spoken Norwegian at home with her mother and father until 1920 approximately. But when these two died, there was no one left who spoke Norwegian in my family in America. They saw, of course, that this was a project that was going to die. But the last generation that perceives itself as Norwegian, it is actually my generation, namely my three cousins who grew up in Donalda, in Alberta, and they want to be buried in the old Norwegian cemetery. But their children, who are of your age, they could not care less, because they all around in the US, they like to come once a year and see the old farm, but it is also sold now. Here, many years, they have seen my father. There is nothing left of Norwegian identity. It goes into the American mainstream culture.

7. The lives of those who stayed at home in Norway were also strongly affected by the emigration. If one thinks of Nesje, who lost, in a way, all his sons, what was his opinion (those who stayed at home) of the emigration? How did they relate to America in the Old World?

E.H.: Nesje was against emigration and he thought that it was wrong for Norway. He thought that we should cultivate Norway's land and build Norway and the modern society. But the others (the sons, Eilert's siblings, my grandfather) got letters that we have also now. They wrote twice a year, for Christmas and other holidays because they all had busy lives. They wrote a little about how they lived, but there were very few who could write honestly if they struggled. And when it became difficult in the '30s, Eilert did not write anything about it to his brother. It was quite a logical thing that those who emigrated and invested so much, that they had to hide their problems. But it also came as ... There was a lot of news from America in Norwegian newspapers during that period. So, they knew that not everything was easy.

But those who had travelled had travelled, and those who remained, remained, and so it was.

Those who stayed at home were the ones with the longing?

E.H.: I do not know. Nesje hopes that his son will come home, but he never does. Some younger ones travelled and came back, but most never came back. And then you have to reconcile with this. I think it's very strange that you never see your brothers again. Eilert came to Norway twice, but very many others never came back.

8. What was important to you during the research process in order to be able to reproduce the atmosphere from the 19th and 20th centuries?

E.H.: There are many who say that it happened a long time ago and that they must have thought in a completely different way than us, but I do not agree with that, they were like us. There is a considerable amount of data on how they thought and on the importance of religion, for example. Otherwise, the human problems were the same as ours, I would think. There were, of course, much more stable societies, much more stable families, almost no divorces, it was after all so that once you had entered into a marriage you could not just run away. This was not possible. I think we have both great works of fiction from that time, and we have a fantastic amount of material in general that shows us what they prioritized and thought and talked about. But then it's a fiction, of course, it's a fiction novel, so I tend to say that there are two types of truth here: it's the documentary, namely it means that everything must be correct as a documentary should be, for example if we say that the war in Norway began on April 12, 1940, then it would be wrong. No one can write a novel and say that it began on April 9, 1940. And all the other data such as the price of a harness, the price of a ticket to travel to the US, the places they travelled to, all this has to be correctly documented as far as this is possible to find out. But then I say that there is also a poetic truth. There are some at the university here who say that the historical novel is impossible because we do not know the difference between what is written and what is true. But then I say that there is something called poetic truth. My readers understand that when there is a marital conversation on the prairie at night, no one was under the bed with an audio tape to record that. And we accept that, as this is the contract between the readers and me and the readers

understand that it is Edvard Hoem who composed this here. But sometimes it can be at least as true, it's just a different type of truth. We are very similar when we react to grief, when we react to betrayal, when we react to lies, when we react to all they had the way we have it. They were not better people compared to us; they were not worse people either; they had at least as big dreams as we do. They were like us.

9. How relevant are the historical novels of our time?

E.H.: I do not know, but it sells very well as the whole of Norway reads these books now. I almost never go out on the street without meeting someone who wants to talk about these books. And I just have to get used to it. I had a conversation with my wife yesterday. We talked about Norwegian priests, that they only want to be priests from 9 to 4, and to have a free Monday. And those who are otherwise not priests, they are only priests when they are at work, but then I say that are only priests when they are at work, the rest of us, must be writers all the time, when we go out and people talk to us. It always happens, everywhere here in Oslo, and especially where I come from, of course. But I have to be a writer and be at work, and answer politely when people ask me and talk to me about their relatives in America. It means a lot to the large reading audience. But it is also quite striking that, I mean with these fiction books, it is incredibly little academic interest in relation to the interest exhibited by the audience. I have sold 300,000 books in 4 years and it is good. They were written in Nynorsk, a language that many do not want to read at all. This is much more important to me, really. But I also think that they are very literary books. I have seen a Danish translation and I was very happy, because all these stories have some hidden reference to the Bible or to other works…, very much underlying… which many readers do not perceive. But it does not matter because some readers would discover that it is very literary, while others will say that this is just literary-suspense.

10. What should people today understand or not forget from the emigration stories of the 19th and 20th centuries?

E.H.: Yes, it is that emigration is an international and a timeless phenomenon. I remember the first time I had a lecture about *Haymaker in Heaven*. There were two Italians there who lived in Norway because they married to Norwegian women. They were musicians, both of them, and they said: this is not a local or a Norwegian problem, we also have mothers who

sit in Sicily and miss us and it is a little easier to visit the mothers now, but it is the same, that families are being broken up, people are being separated and this is much more encountered today. All those who come here for better or worse have parents somewhere or very many of them are part of the course of history and emigration is part of the course of history.

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Immigrants on an Atlantic Liner.

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